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ABSTRACT

This collection of 22 brief resource guides for parents provides information on various aspects of child development and parenting. Topics include (1) planning an in-home toddler playgroup; (2) terrific and terrible 2-year-olds; (3) 3- and 4-year-olds; (4) the middle years from 6 through 11; (5) adolescents; (6) helping parents discuss sex with young children; (7) preparing for kindergarten; (8) infants and parents; (9) communication between parents and their teenage children; (10) creating environments for young children's play with found and scrounged materials; (11) ages and stages of 6- to 8-year-olds; (12) ages and stages of children 9 to 11 years of age; (13) parent involvement in schools; (14) the world of the 5-year-old; (15) preparing to take a child to the hospital; (16) day care; (17) protecting children from child abuse and neglect in New York State; (18) planning for temporary, incidental child care to enable adults to attend meetings; (19) more parent involvement in schools; (20) how parents can help children learn about money; (21) choosing child care for infants and toddlers; and (22) tips on working with children in groups. Discussions include suggestions and offer guidelines. Bibliographic citations indicate sources of additional information on the topics discussed. (RH)

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Planning Toddler Playgroup in your own home

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by Phyllis Silverman
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- Your toddler perks up when she sees other children. You think that it might be time for her to socialize more.
- You need a break from your child during the day, and you think that a playgroup might be the way to get it.
- You and your toddler seem to be battling more of the time. You notice that she appears to be more reasonable and independent with other children.

Parents have many reasons for seeking a playgroup for their young children, and there are many kinds of playgroups to meet those needs. This fact sheet focuses on how parents can organize a playgroup at home for toddlers approximately 18 to 30 months old.

Planning the Playgroup

Whether the playgroup is made up of friends or acquaintances, it is important that you meet together to decide ground rules. Some of these have to do with the structure and organization of the group, and some with the values reflected there.

Purpose of the group

The usual purpose of a toddler playgroup is to provide a way for young children to play with other children their age. Some parents may also see it as an opportunity for time away from their children; others, as a time to meet other parents and share support and information. Being clear about the purpose of the group will help you to make other structural decisions.

Numbers

You may already have enough friends with toddlers to form a group. Five toddlers is an average number if you are going to meet in someone's home. Even if space and supervision permit more, 6 to 8 toddlers should be the maximum number in one group. Remember that noise level and number of children to interact with affect young children's tolerance of one another and their behavior in the group. If you start out with a large number of participants, you will probably want to break up into smaller groups. If you don't know enough people to start a group, a sign prominently displayed in a supermarket or a word to your pediatrician's nurse should help you find other interested parents.

How often and how long will you meet?

How often the playgroup meets depends somewhat on its stated purpose. If parents choose to remain during the playgroup, meeting once a week is fine. If parents choose to use the playgroup as an opportunity to have some time away from children, it is better to meet twice a week so that children have a chance to get used to the experience. Scheduling more than two playgroup meetings a week should be done only after the group has met for some time and you have observed your child's reaction to being with other children. Remember that sharing space, toys, and adults with others may be difficult at first.

Two hours is an appropriate amount of time for a group to meet. It allows for a warm-up period and a variety of activities, yet ends before children disintegrate from fatigue.

Where will the group meet?

The deciding factors here are the children's safety and security, space to explore, and variety of play materials available. It is easier to

rotate homes if parents choose to stay during the playgroup, since basic security will be available by the parents' presence in each home. Still, many groups do rotate environments even when parents are not available during the group time. They do this cautiously, parents staying for at least one or two sessions in each person's home before leaving their toddler alone.

Each home in which the group meets should be checked for possible safety hazards and play space available. If one home is clearly superior in indoor and outdoor space and in materials available, the group might decide to meet there on a regular basis, arranging for other parents to bring snacks and to clean up after the group is over. Remember: a consistent meeting place can provide security to children when parents are not available.

Who is in charge?

When one of the functions of the group is to provide some time alone for parents, there will have to be a scheduled rotation of parents in charge. One parent may be able to handle four toddlers. If more than four toddlers are in a group, two parents should stay. When all parents remain, you may still want to have one or two parents in charge of getting things going that day and doing the major supervision. This system allows other parents to talk together more easily, knowing that children are being carefully looked after.

Values

It is important for parents to reach some agreement on issues involving personal values *before* they decide to meet together on a regular basis, since these decisions have direct bearing on how children's behavior will be handled in the group. Many parents have strongly held child-rearing attitudes. Clarity about the group's child-rearing decisions will prevent some uncomfortable feelings later and may lead to greater consistency in care to the children.

Basic premise

Keep in mind that running a toddler group takes skill and compassion. Toddlers are only just developing a clearly defined sense of self. Getting along with others is sometimes a difficult and strenuous task. Being with toddlers is trying for many adults because toddlers exhibit intense self-centeredness or anger that provoke strong feelings in grownups as well. Remember that the toddler deserves sympathy in his/her struggle for autonomy. Realistic, firm limits may be clearly set without unnecessarily squelching curiosity and assertiveness.

Deciding about limits and discipline

What will you do if a toddler hits or bites another child? How much "sharing" can you reasonably expect? How much screaming, climbing, throwing, will you allow? When and how will adults intervene in children's squabbles? A good place to start in your discussion about discipline is to understand how toddlers are likely to act with materials, peers, and adults. Many potential problems can be solved by careful planning of the play area. For example, having an appropriate climbing structure will eliminate inappropriate climbing on shelves and tables. Having more than one ball, doll, pull toy, pegboard, or truck will cut down *somewhat* on the amount of fighting over toys. Having opportunities for nonsharing play — closets to hide in, a big carton that many children can play in at once — will still further cut down on the need for adult intervention.

Other problems, particularly those involving recurrent aggression, need to be dealt with in a firm and calm manner. "That's not okay, you need to be gentle." "First X will have a turn. When she's finished, it will be your turn." Remember that this is a beginning socialization experience for your child. It should be sensitively handled.

Food policies

Will there be a group snack? What will it be? The playgroup may be a good arena for introducing nutritious snacks — cheese and crackers, fruit and peanut butter, juice instead of artificially flavored and sweetened drinks. Toddler participation in preparing their own snacks (peanut butter balls, fruit salad, apple butter spread on bread) is a good playgroup activity. Many children are willing to try new foods when they are with other children and not at home. Parents may want to discuss other food-related questions, such as whether sugar and salt will be used in foods and what guidelines should be set for eating behavior. Will there be a time and place to eat? Will you allow walking around with food?

Your group may also want to discuss other issues about which parents feel strongly.

Running the Playgroup

Routines

Young children enjoy and seem to benefit from a certain amount of predictability — the knowledge that some things can be counted on to happen on a regular basis. Routines help toddlers feel more secure. Examples of possible playgroup routines include:

- taking off one's coat and putting it in a specific place,
- having snack at a particular table at a regular time (after free play and before going outside, perhaps),
- a time to play outside,
- a quiet time for looking at books, doing puzzles.

Some routines are nice for toddlers, but overroutinizing is not appropriate for young children (for example, you don't need a strict time schedule).

The play environment

Clear Space. Toddlers like to run, to ride, and to push wheeled vehicles. They are still gaining control over their bodies and they often fall. Hallways, clear pathways through playrooms, and outside space are important.

Physical challenge. The older toddler has perfected walking. He or she is ready for more interesting physical activities — walking backwards, jumping off of things, climbing higher. A sanded piece of plywood easily turns into a ramp or a bridge between two low tables. A rolled-up carpet to walk on adds an interesting challenge to keeping one's balance. Jumping from a low stair into a bean bag chair is exciting and safe.

Toys. Putting too much out at once causes confusion and disruption as toddlers rush from one toy to another. It is better to have fewer toys out, rotating in new ones as children lose interest in what is available. Toddlers enjoy *collectibles* (little people, cubed blocks, checkers, pegs, sticks from outside). Toddlers like putting those things in boxes, pockets, hidden places. Toddlers also enjoy *mastery materials,* like puzzles, shape boxes, simple sewing cards, and peg boards, that give them a sense of accomplishment and help them feel competent. This need for mastery increases as children reach two years old and beyond.

Language materials. *Books* involve learning language and concepts, and they are comforting to the toddler who has a chance to look at one while sitting on an adult's lap. Books should be readily available, not kept out of reach. *Finger plays and songs* are language activities that can help pull a group together. They are especially useful when the children need to wait for snacktime or for mom's return.

Symbolic play materials. Blocks, dress-up clothes, dolls, and dishes are important for the two-year-olds who are beginning to use them in pretend or dramatic play. At 30 months, the child uses blocks not just for knocking down, but also for building a bridge or zoo. Pots are more often used for "cooking" something specific, and one "dresses up" to go shopping or to work. Accompanying accessories — like a mirror to look in, shopping bags with empty food tins, and plastic or rubber people and animals — help children develop their play to a greater depth.

Sensory materials. Water, cornmeal, play dough, and finger paint are exciting to some twos, but may be less appealing to those who are concerned about toilet training and "mess." These activities should be attempted only when the adults in charge feel particularly energetic. Careful planning and preparation for cleanup help save time.

Organizing the play area is an art. Cozy, soft pillows or mattresses are wonderful for looking at books. Messy play is best done close to a water source. Noisy blocks are good to use in an out-of-the-way part of the room. Table toys are ideally placed on a low, open shelf or low table. Dress-up hats and bags are most appealing when hanging from pegs on a wall near a mirror.

Remember that less is more! It is not advisable to have all of these areas available at once. Dress-up clothes when brought out and highlighted by an adult are explored with more interest than when routinely left lying around. Similarly, small quantities of blocks with some attractive accessories may be used more thoughtfully and for a longer period than when water play, play dough, and tricycles are also competing for the child's attention.

Taking a toddler walk. The world is the toddler's curriculum. Everything is interesting and exciting to watch, walk on, and touch. Toddler walks are usually short in distance, but they take a long time.

Time and effort spent in planning a playgroup will result in a positive experience for parents and children.

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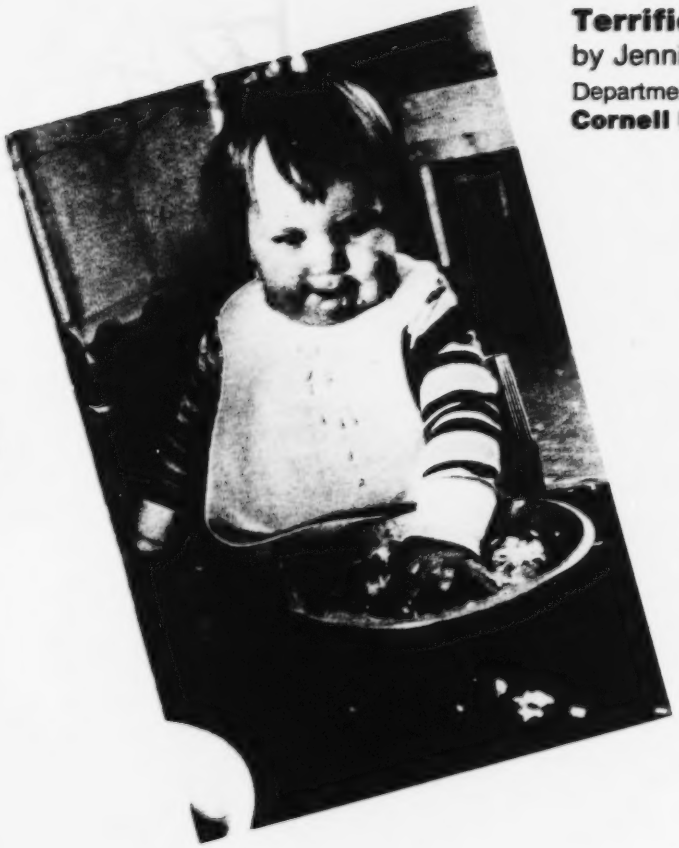

Terrific and Terrible Two-Year-Olds

by Jennifer Birckmayer
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So you are the parent of a two-year-old! Or perhaps you teach or provide day care for two-year-olds. Better than anyone else, you know how terrific — and how terrible — two-year-olds can sometimes be. Angelic and charming at one moment, a two-year-old can change instantly into a furious, noisy bundle of striking fists and flailing feet — and may not have any idea of what brought about the sudden change. An understanding of what makes them tick may provide some helpful clues as parents and caregivers attempt to work out ways of living comfortably with two-year-olds.

At every age, there are important tasks to accomplish in the process of growing up. Psychologist Erik Erikson suggests that we can think about human growth in terms of eight stages. The first stage is that of establishing a sense of **basic trust** and is particularly critical for human infants. The second stage occurs during the second and third years of life when the child struggles to establish a sense of **autonomy.** As Erikson describes it, "This whole stage, then, becomes *a battle of autonomy.* For as he gets ready to stand on his feet more firmly, the infant also learns to delineate his world as 'I' and 'you' and 'me' and 'mine.' Every mother knows how astonishingly pliable a child may be at this stage, if and when he has made the decision that he wants to do what he is supposed to do. It is impossible however to find a formula for making him want to do just that. Every mother knows how lovingly a child at this stage will snuggle close to her and how ruthlessly he will push her away. At the same time the child is likely both to hoard things and to discard them, to cling to treasured objects and to throw them out of the windows of houses and vehicles."* To develop autonomy is to develop a feeling of selfhood — of being "me" apart from "you."

Two-year-olds show us how hard they are struggling to develop autonomy in many ways.

- During the period from one to three, most children learn to walk. Imagine what a sense of power a child experiences when he/she masters the art of being two-legged instead of creeping around on all fours! Suddenly stove handles, TV knobs, and objects on the tops of coffee tables are visible and reachable, and the hands previously used in crawling are now free to touch, handle, twist, and convey to eager small mouths. No wonder two-year-olds are among the world's greatest explorers! To acquire the use of one's legs for walking and one's hands for touching must be an exhilarating feeling — and most toddlers spend many of their working hours practicing walking, touching, and otherwise investigating the wonderful world that lies before them.
- During this time children also discover the power, the variety, and the fun of language. Words like "me," "mine," and "no!" are ways of stating to themselves and other people that they are defining themselves as independent decision makers. This step is an important one is establishing autonomy. Behavior that

*Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton & Co., 1968), p. 108.

appears to be negative may instead be strong evidence of a healthy growth push. Of course, growing up can be pretty scary sometimes, and often a two-year-old who is bravely defiant one minute regresses to whimpering, thumb-sucking babyhood in the next.

Two-year-olds are likely to find that the adults in their lives believe that such civilized behaviors as toilet training and table manners should be acquired before the third birthday. Sometimes a two-year-old's struggle for autonomy can be hindered by a well-meaning adult who wants to produce an obedient, conforming child. While many two-year-olds do indeed learn to use a toilet and to use acceptable table manners, adults should try to offer guidance that helps children master themselves and thus grow up to be in control of their own behavior. Anyone can threaten or force a young child to behave in a particular way, but it takes skill and patience to help very young children develop appropriate self control — and to feel proud of themselves for doing so. One helpful technique for parents and teachers is to change "don'ts" into "do's." For example:

Change these statements	**to these:**
You're a bad girl for wetting your pants.	Next time try to use the potty.
Stop putting applesauce in your hair.	Keep the applesauce on your plate or in your mouth.
Don't squeeze the cat.	Pet the cat gently — like this.

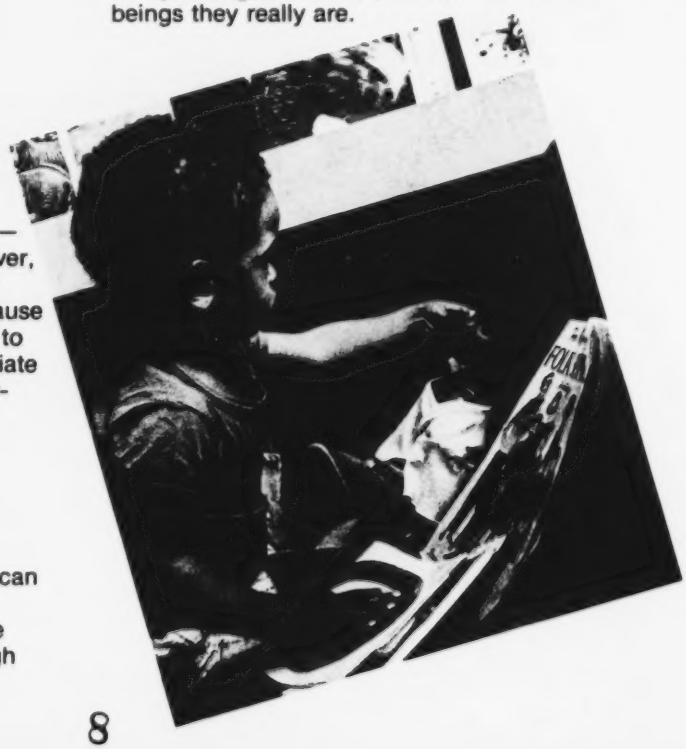
Two-year-olds often enjoy being with people — especially children their own age — more than they did at an earlier age. However, their social skills are primitive at best. They rarely share toys consistently, perhaps because learning to act autonomously means trying to remain in control of oneself and the immediate surroundings. And although some two-year-olds behave sympathetically toward other people, it is doubtful that they have a real understanding of the feeling of others. Two-year-olds need constant, careful supervision whether playing alone or with others.

In summary, the characteristics parents can hope to enjoy in two-year-olds include:

- Developing autonomy as they become independent decision makers (although they often retreat to babyhood when the going gets rough).
- Increasing physical and intellectual skills as they explore the world by touching, tasting, smelling, listening, and seeing.
- Blossoming social skills as they poke and push (and often taste!) other people in their early attempts to make friends.
- Beginning interests in civilized behaviors such as using a toilet (but not all the time), using a spoon, keeping food on the table or plate (instead of on the floor or in their hair).
- Language! The magic of words means that books, songs, and conversation rank high on their list of favorite activities.

So what do two-year-olds need from adults?

Patience — as they explore and experiment, agree and disagree, behave like babies and behave like sturdy, growing little people.
Flexibility — to help us withstand the mood and behavioral swings from sweetly reasonable to defiantly unreasonable.
Protection — it's up to us to see that their ceaseless explorations occur in a safe, child-proofed environment.
Loving firmness — life without consistent, gently enforced rules can be terrifying.
Humor and appreciation — so that we can see two-year-olds as the creative, exasperating, wonderful, determined human beings they really are.



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3 and 4 year Olds

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As the dust settles from the two-year old's tremendous battle for autonomy, the three- and four-year-olds move into a stage of giant developmental strides and widening horizons. The world for them is an alluring place to explore with less dependence on adults — they want to touch, smell, hear, taste, and test things for themselves. A growing ability to use their bodies with more skill has eliminated some of the frustrating obstacles they encountered at age two. They are able to use language more skillfully, too, and often use rather sophisticated language patterns. Struggling to gain an inner control, they are in transition from strong egocentric awareness to a growing concern and social interest in others. Their private dream worlds allow them to try on the various roles they have observed and help to organize their thinking and understanding. Above all, they are individuals, and they need provision for their diversity and acceptance and understanding by the adults in their day-to-day world.

Two aspects of growth in preschool children should be kept in mind:

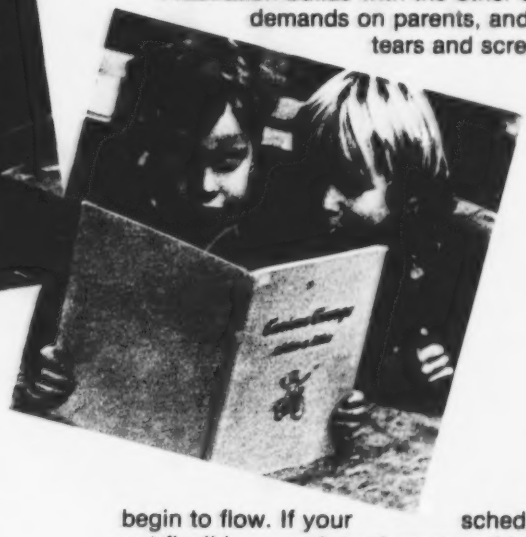
First, development is gradual, continuous, and builds one stage upon another. A child's physical growth is certainly an obvious example of this gradual and continuous process. The once-immobile baby learns to roll over, scoot, crawl, stand, walk holding on, practice, let go, and ah . . . finally walk alone!

Another exciting glimpse of this continuous process can be seen in a young child's artwork over time. The stages are distinct, from scribbles to representation, as a child gradually gains both physical and intellectual control. The scribbles take form, and these forms begin to represent important aspects of the child's life — family, home, pets, and many other interests.

Second, children learn best through action. Adults often assume that telling is synonymous with teaching. Perhaps it would be helpful to imagine how ridiculous it would be for an adult to teach a preschool child how to ride a bike by showing the child a diagram! This is a far-fetched example, but its point is clear: children learn by doing and by acting upon their world at their own pace. They need time, and we need patience to allow them to do the task at hand, to practice with our support, and to develop the stamina to persist. All of these are critical aspects of a developing attitude toward learning. This teaching approach also takes planning, for determined children do not wait for Saturday morning to decide they have to scramble the eggs for breakfast!

Building on this premise, let us share a nutshell glimpse of three- and four-year-olds:

- Children are active learners at this stage and prefer not to sit. Chairs are probably the least-used equipment in any setting. They need space both indoors and outside for spontaneous movement and exploration. Even in small areas, this need can be met if spaces and objects are used creatively — for example, by piling a few old pillows together as an allowed place for jumping, or by installing a swing with a canvas seat in an interior doorway.
- Children are noisy. They have much to say, sometimes whatever comes into their mind. They are beginning to expand their use of language, and words can now be substituted for action. (Their linguistic ability should not be mistaken, however, for intellectual understanding — young children are great mimics!) We can understand our preschoolers' thinking more clearly if we listen carefully to their questions and to their responses to our questions. One night after an interesting conversation about conception and birth, four-year-old Sally (who had seemed to be contributing clearly "learned" statements by appropriately naming body parts and how things went together for conception



to take place) asked: "Daddy, who came first, you or me?" Much was revealed in that comment. She knew all the words, but she had not understood the process.

- Children are not real "joiners" at this stage and need to be able to define their own "gang." Masses often overwhelm them, and small gatherings are much more successful than large, unorganized groups. If you live in a child-filled neighborhood, you may find it hard to control every play situation. However, inviting a companion over for lunch and providing experiences that have a common interest to both children is a gratifying alternative.

  Selecting a nursery school, a play group, or a day care center/home with this criteria in mind is helpful. Children work together better in small groups, which are not overstimulating or too competitive. In small groups, children have more time to learn about one another and to enjoy one another.
- Their point of reference is intensely personal and they are still highly egocentric. They are full of themselves and want to initiate things on their own and carry out their own ideas. Frustration can build at this point, for on the other side of egocentrism is the reality of what they *cannot* reach, touch, see, and control. During this period, they need our time, patience, praise, and understanding, for their struggle is real. Why is it that some preschoolers always decide that they are going to tie their own shoes right in the middle of traffic when you are already late for work, a doctor's appointment, or a sibling's hockey practice! Their desire to learn is not a scheduled or planned occurrence. Frustration builds with the other daily demands on parents, and the tears and screams begin to flow. If your schedule is not flexible enough to drop everything and teach your child to tie his shoe "on command," try writing a note to yourself and reading it aloud: "Tonight when we all get home, I will help you learn to tie your shoe." Put it up where your child can see it, and keep to your word.
- Children at this stage are mistake prone. They squeeze the cat too hard, pinch their siblings, spill their milk, shout when others are quiet, grab even when they "know" they should not. According to one early childhood educator, "They make their errors in part because their coordination is still so uncertain. They err in part because their emotions are so strong, because they are so inexperienced, so uninformed. Because so many of life's lessons simply take a long time to learn, they 'know' a little about these lessons, but they haven't mastered them — and they forget."[1]

It is hard for us to remember sometimes that these young children are still virtual newcomers to this "strange planet." They are beginners, and beginnings can be frustrating to both the child and the adult. In Eve Merridan's words, "It takes a lot of slow to grow." Maybe that is one of the most important things for us to reflect upon — it takes time and practice for adults to allow, accept, hug, laugh, guide, and enjoy, but what a rewarding way to share a life!

[1]James Hymes, *Teaching the Child Under Six*, p. 33.

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Resources for Parents and Others Who Care about Children

The Middle Years: Six-eleven

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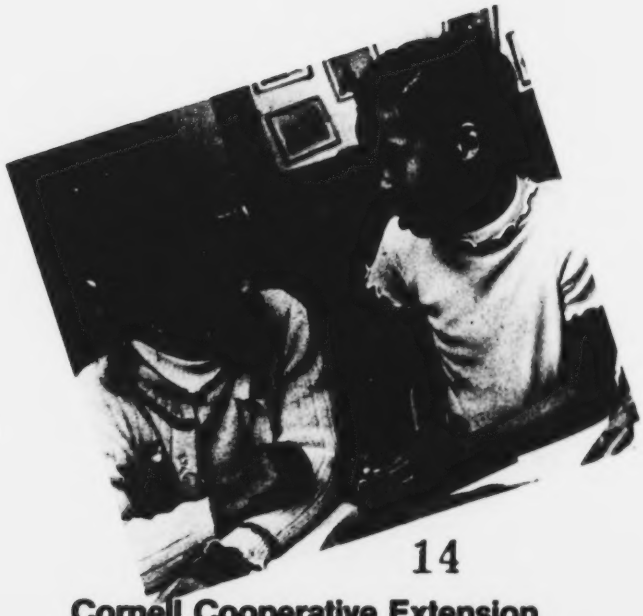

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Riding a bike across town, building a clubhouse with friends, playing ball in the schoolyard, or crossing the street for that first solo trip to the store, the middle-years child can be found everywhere. The years from age 6 to 11, sometimes called the middle years, are characterized by a dramatic widening of the environment into which the child is an eager adventurer.

Psychologist Erik Erikson has suggested that the life span can be divided into eight "ages." At a given age of development, children's perceptions of their world and their interactions with it are structured by the concerns and needs of that age. In the middle years, the child's primary needs are for achievement, social acceptance, and the development of a sense of self. Building on a strong foundation of love, acceptance, trust, and care, and having successfully mastered a preschooler's world, the 6-year-old is ready to meet the challenges ahead.

School is the first major venture for this "commuter" to the outside world. At school, and in a host of other settings, the 6- to 11-year-old child faces many tasks that must be mastered. Children during these years must acquire new skills, knowledge, and abilities while managing separation from home and family, accepting other adults as authority figures, and growing as social beings. They are maturing, as well as refining behaviors and developing abilities that were already evident during the preschool years. Most children continue to show the temperament and personality traits that characterized their earlier years.

For a parent or caregiver of a middle-years child, this can be a time of special demands and often confusing feelings. You may be proud of your brave 6-year-old off to the first day of school, sad about his leaving, and perhaps anxious about what lies ahead. You may delight in your daughter's being the best baseball player on the block and wish, a little jealously, that you had enjoyed that status as a child in your own neighborhood. It may be difficult getting used to the shift in status you've taken in your child's eyes — from the person who "knew it all' to one whose every idea, value, and action is questioned and challenged. But, despite the increasing influence of friends, the widening exposure to the outside world, and the push for independence, your child still finds in your family the main base of security and identity.

According to Erikson, the major task of the child from 6 to 11 years of age is to achieve a sense of industry rather than one of inferiority. Accomplishments must be made in three major ways: through developing a sense of self, gaining social acceptance, and experiencing achievement.

In developing a sense of self, children push for independence. They begin to see their parents more realistically than they did as young children, and they begin to form a view of themselves as part of a larger world. They must confront that world's view of them, too, including labels such as rich and poor, smart and dumb, fat and skinny. The nicknames that often develop out of these labels can be a mixed blessing. The child maturing and developing a healthy sense of self may be aware of her individuality and grow to accept even her own shortcomings. A nickname that seems almost cruel to adults may be a source of pride to the child who feels a measure of acceptance from the friends who gave the name.

Friendship provides an important testing ground for learning new skills and behavior. With friends, children can learn how to lead and follow, how to express feelings, and how to share. Friends may serve as a yardstick against which children can compare their own feelings, reactions, and achievements, and with whom they can share information about themselves. Parents and other adults are meant to feel excluded, in some ways, as children band together in the peer group to push for independence.

This is the age of rituals, traditional games, riddles, tricks, and superstitions. It is a time for clubs — perhaps a clubhouse to which no adult knows the secret password.

Children in the middle years experience major growth both physically and mentally and become better able to devote steady attention to learning and doing. A sense of achievement comes from mastering skills, realizing new abilities and talents, attaining competence, and gaining insights. New cognitive skills enable children to organize and classify, for example, a stamp collection or a tray of butterflies. The 6-year-old is proud of learning to ride a two-wheeler, and the 9-year-old is proud of having taught him. "Absolutely right" and "positively wrong" to the 7-year-old become "maybe" and "yes, but" to the 9-year-old as she grows more able to see a situation through someone else's eyes.

In the constant striving for accomplishment, each victory builds self-confidence, but the failures are often magnified out of proportion. An important role for adults is helping children to accept challenges as well as to cope with failure and frustration.

Children need parents and caring adults to:

- help keep a delicate balance between autonomy and dependence, knowing when to "let go" and when to set limits, offer guidance, and perhaps provide a lap to sit on;
- enjoy a child's growing capabilities while being patient with the learning process (the budding baker is apt to leave the kitchen a mess);
- treat each child as an individual who should not be compared with parents or siblings;
- provide opportunities for sharing projects and activities, including adult skills and interests in woodworking, crafts, card playing, and sports;
- understand a child's desire to be "privy" to an adult world while still enjoying the privileges of childhood;
- encourage and provide opportunities to enjoy and appreciate a variety of people and groups;
- set examples for behaviors and attitudes they want children to learn;
- help children to express and understand feelings of love, anger, and happiness.

Lying between the dramatic growth spurts of early childhood and the turbulent years of adolescence, the middle years are sometimes ignored or passed over by "experts." The development that occurs in a child during these years may be quiet by comparison, but it is nonetheless steady and exciting. During these years, the child is growing physically and mentally, meeting challenges, and developing potentialities. These years provide the groundwork for adolescence and adulthood. If the middle years are fraught with anxieties and failure, the child is likely to face adolescence with a sense of insecurity and inferiority. But the middle-years child who has met and overcome challenges, who has built friendships and learned to handle his or her own problems will develop the sense of self needed to cope with the insecurities of adolescence and, later, to face the world as an independent and self-confident adult.

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adolescents

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The young are prone to desire and in regard to sexual desire they exercise no self-restraint. They are changeful, too, and fickle in their desires. They are passionate, irascible, and apt to be carried away by their impulses. They are slaves, too, of their passion.

A distinguished scientist and philosopher made this observation over 2000 years ago. To some, Aristotle's lament might suggest that adolescents haven't changed much since the days of ancient Athens, but recent research indicates that what hasn't changed is adults' *perceptions* of adolescents. Surveys of adolescents and their parents show that their values and attitudes are generally quite compatible. The famous "generation gap" appears to be an invention of the news media in response to a small but highly visible group of adolescents whose challenge to the older generation in the 1960s was mistakenly interpreted as representative.

What is it about the stage of life between childhood and adulthood that makes it so difficult for adults to understand? Although adolescence is not equally troublesome in all societies and for all families, adults' reports of its stressful nature are sufficiently widespread to warrant attention.

Change — physical, mental, and social change — is the most notable quality of adolescence and accounts for a good deal of the difficulty.

Physical Changes

The most obvious physical change during adolescence is rapid acceleration of growth. Within two years before or after age 12 for girls and age 14 for boys, a growth spurt occurs. The rate of gain in height and weight typically doubles for a year or more. Physical growth takes place in a fairly consistent sequence, beginning at the extremities and moving inward. Head, hands, and feet enlarge first, followed by arms and legs, then trunk. The broadening of male shoulders and female hips that characterizes adult body form occurs last. Overall growth is accompanied, though not always in the same order or at the same rate, by maturation of the reproductive organs and glands and by the appearance of pubic and underarm hair, and facial hair in males.

Together, these physical changes accomplish the biological aspect of adolescence, which is known as pubescence: they transform a child into an adult, one who is able to have children.

But this physical transformation is not as simple for the person going through it as it sounds when described in the abstract. For one thing, the ages at which pubescence begins and is completed vary as much as four years among different young people. Furthermore, the period from beginning to completion may be as little as 18 months for some and as much as six years for others. As a result of this variation, any group of early adolescents is likely to include young people who are at very different points in pubescence. Because girls enter pubescence, on the average, two years earlier than boys, the greatest variation among girls' physical maturation occurs during ages 11–13, while in boys it is during ages 13–15.

Rapid change combined with wide variation among individuals tend to make adolescents extremely sensitive to their appearance. At no other time in life are feelings about the self (self-esteem) so closely tied to feelings about the body (body image). Physical appearance also affects the ways in which other people treat an adolescent. Adults tend to expect adult behavior from a 15-year-old boy who is six feet tall and shaves regularly, but they will readily excuse childish behavior on the part of his classmate who, though the same age, has not yet begun his growth spurt. Perhaps even more importantly, peers judge one another on the basis of physical size and appearance. Early maturation can be an advantage for boys but often is not for girls because it puts them out-of-step with their peers.

The physical changes of pubescence, therefore, have direct effects on adolescents' social relations. They also affect emotions. The maturation of the gonads—reproductive glands—changes the balance of hormones in the body, which can result in new sensitivities to the environment. For example, an adolescent may have a heightened sensitivity to loss of sleep, which results in moodiness or outbursts of temper. Cyclical changes in hormonal balance, especially among girls but also to some extent among boys, are associated with changes in emotions, behavior, and thinking. Since these cycles are new to adolescents, they may not be handled well.

Mental Changes

The most important mental change during adolescence is the growth in capacity for abstract thinking. Before age 11 or 12, children think in terms of concrete objects and groups of objects. Their reasoning is simple and direct. It does not allow for much complexity or subtlety. Given a problem to solve, the child tends to plunge into it with first one possible solution and then another until she either finds the correct solution or gives up. Confronted with a moral dilemma, she responds on the basis of a rule, which may or may not be appropriately applied.

By age 16, most adolescents have transcended this simple way of thinking, though not all of them adopt the most complex forms of reasoning. Nor do all use the same types of reasoning about all issues, any more than adults do. Adolescents begin to achieve the capacity to approach a problem systematically. Instead of moving immediately into the trying out of an assortment of solutions, they can analyze the problem and arrive at some tentative conclusions about what sorts of solutions probably will and will not work. Then they can proceed in a logical fashion to test and evaluate solutions, gaining a greater understanding of the problem along the way.

Moral issues become much more complex than they are for young children because adolescents are able to understand that two sound rules or principles might conflict in some cases. For example, they will understand that in certain situations, the values of friendship and honesty conflict, and they will struggle with a question about whether someone should report a friend for breaking a rule. Younger children are more likely to choose either one principle or the other without recognizing the dilemma. Furthermore, adolescents outgrow the childish belief that only evil people do bad things. They understand that accident and circumstances involve even the best-intentioned people in undesirable actions. They are, therefore, likely to be more understanding and forgiving of human frailty than young children, though their interest in principles can also make adolescents morally rigid at times.

Along with the capacity to think abstractly comes the realization that what exists is only one of many possibilities. Thinking about those possibilities becomes a fascinating activity. The real is frequently compared to the ideal and found wanting. Because they can conceive of a more ideal world without having to bother themselves with all the details of how it might be achieved and what drawbacks it might have, adolescents are often impatient with the real world and with the failure of adults to have made it better already.

This capacity to think about many possible realities is important, given the momentous choices adolescents will make as they move into adulthood and choose career directions, educational paths, and mates. Without it they are likely to drift into the first opportunities that arise without considering what the other possibilities might be, which are most desirable, and which are feasible.

Similarly, the ability to reason about moral issues is necessary if a person is to establish a personal moral code. Rules and principles simply accepted from parents and other authorities are essential to children, but adolescents need to think through rules and principles and consider the alternatives in order to adopt or adapt them for themselves. An adolescent who does not go through the process of questioning principles and values may be without guidance when confronted with a new and complex moral dilemma or when one or another of his/her basic principles is seriously challenged.

Social Changes

Because of their physical and mental growth, adolescents are no longer treated like children. The expectations adults and peers have of them change and their behavior changes. Thus the social world in which they live changes in important ways.

One of the most obvious social changes is the initiation of serious interest in and interactions with young people of the opposite sex. The physical and emotional changes of pubescence described above lead to strong new feelings between girls and boys. Even before they begin to act upon these feelings by dating and engaging in other heterosexual activities, many adolescents begin to have "crushes" on opposite-sex peers, and sometimes on same-sex peers and on adults. These one-way emotional attachments simply indicate the presence of new emotional capacities, but they can be difficult for the adolescent to understand and deal with. Learning to handle the emotions and behavior that go along with attracting and forming emotional attachments to members of the opposite sex can be stressful, in addition to being terribly exciting.

The social world of the adolescent changes in other ways as well. A sixteen-year-old may notice that adults are treating her more like one of them, engaging in real conversation, for example, instead of saying "My, how you've grown," and asking about school. She may also notice that she enjoys this adult conversation when just a year or two before she would have preferred to go out and play.

By the age of sixteen, adolescents are being given many privileges formerly reserved for adults. In most places they can drive a car, quit school, and hold a job. Although it is usually against the law, they can fairly easily smoke and drink alcoholic beverages.

Relations with parents change too. As they grow more mature, adolescents are less dependent on their parents than they were earlier. They might be able to live on their own. They have ideas of their own and are reconsidering some of the beliefs and values their parents have taught them. They receive emotional support from peers. Sometimes their peers' values are inconsistent with their parents'. For all these reasons, they become less deferent to their parents' wishes and opinions, adopting a more independent and often a more aggressive stance.

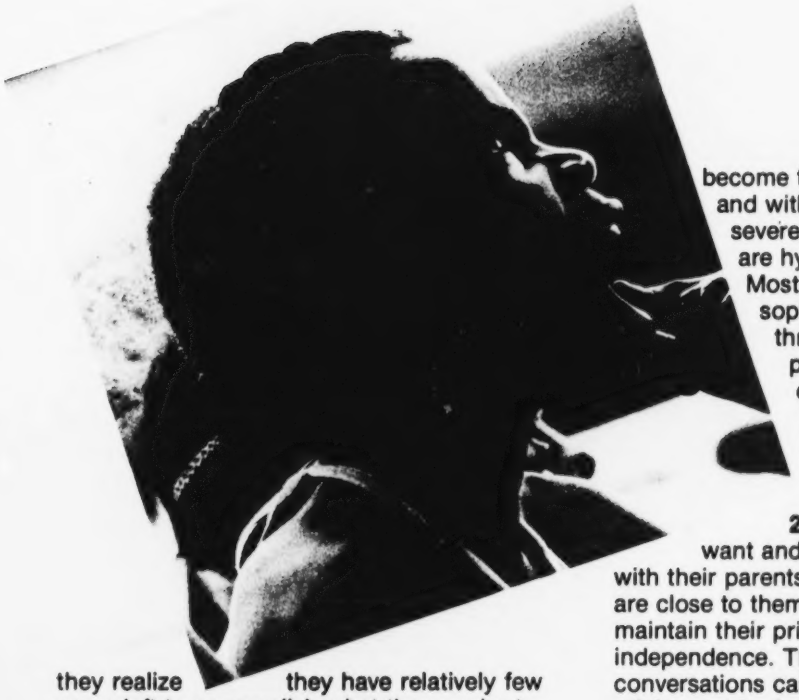
Modern industrial societies demand highly educated workers and do not need the labor of children. Therefore, most young people experience a long gap between the attainment of physical adulthood and adult status. Marriage, parenthood, and full-time paid employment are the principal indicators of adult status in our society. At least two ambiguities arise from this social definition of adulthood. One is that young people are expected to postpone marriage and to remain economically dependent on their parents for several years after they are physically capable of reproduction and full-time employment. A second is that while many young people "prolong their adolescence" by enrolling in college and then in graduate or professional school, many of their peers are entering full-time employment, getting married, and starting families. Although adolescence can be an enjoyable stage of life because of the freedom from adult obligations, it can also be a frustrating time because adult privileges are withheld.

Difficulties for Parents

Adolescents are no longer children; they and their parents have to work out new ways of dealing with each other that recognize their growing but not yet complete maturity. Parents must realize that they can no longer control their offspring in many important areas. Adolescents simply have too many opportunities to do as they please. Young people, who are often adamant in demanding relief from parental control, need to understand that freedom demands responsibility. They cannot expect their parents to give them adult privileges regarding their social activities and then excuse them from household obligations because they are only children.

One of the reasons adolescents often seem to be a burden to their parents is that parents have to change the way they treat their adolescents. Parental behavior that has developed over several years and has been rather effective becomes obsolete. New behavior, a new parental style, is called for.

Being required to deal with new challenges and to behave in different ways is always difficult, but it can be especially difficult for parents of adolescents who are simultaneously experiencing stress in other parts of their lives. The term "midlife crisis" has become popular in recent years in recognition that many people go through a period of self-examination and often of serious readjustment in middle age as



they realize they have relatively few years left to accomplish what they aspire to. Two life cycle changes in the family are associated with this midlife crisis: one is the death of one's own parents and the other is the maturation of one's children. People at this point frequently have to accept the fact that they will not achieve the prominence in their careers that they might have wanted. Common responses to this "crisis" include career and marital changes.

Parents who are experiencing crises of this magnitude are likely to feel overwhelmed by the challenges of dealing with their rapidly changing adolescents. But even parents who feel satisfied and secure in most aspects of their lives may have difficulty coping with their adolescent children.

What Adults Can Do for Adolescents

There are times when the adolescent says, "Why don't you just leave me alone!" and the adult wants to say, "Alright, I will." That is not a solution, however, because adolescents need adults to help them achieve adulthood themselves. The following suggestions may prove helpful to adults who work with adolescents, but they cannot be treated as a cookbook. Just as adolescents refuse to follow many adult "recipes" for proper behavior because they need to work out their own behavioral code, adults must be flexible and resourceful in responding to adolescents. There is no single way to do it.

1. Be honest. With their newly developed capacity for abstract thinking, adolescents become fascinated with principles and with consistency. They are severe critics of adults they think are hypocritical or two-faced. Most adolescents are sophisticated enough to see through dishonesty or pretention in adults who are close to them. They tend to be skeptical at what adults tell them and to welcome any confirmation of that skepticism.

2. Be open. Adolescents want and need to talk about things with their parents and with other adults who are close to them. But they also need to maintain their privacy and their independence. Therefore, adult-adolescent conversations cannot be one-sided, with the adolescent baring his soul and the adult listening and offering advice. Adolescents need to know that some of the same concerns they struggle with are concerns of adults too.

Sexuality is one of the most insistent concerns of adolescents because it is a new one, brought out by their sexual maturation. Adults cannot be very helpful to adolescents about sexual issues unless they, as adults, are comfortable with their own sexuality. They must be willing to acknowledge the complexity of the issues and the strength of the social and emotional pressures. In our society the "official" morality is that sexual relations are limited to marriage, yet television, movies, magazines, songs on the radio, and even billboards bombard us constantly with the message that sexual attractiveness is the most important personal quality and that unrestrained sexual behavior is good. Like adolescents, adults can find this contradiction confusing, and they should be willing to discuss it.

3. Set clear and consistent limits. Most children will abide by rules their parents or other adults set down just because they are rules, at least as long as the adult is looking. Adolescents are much more likely to want to know *why* a particular rule or expectation has been stated. Adults should respect this need for explanation and should allow for some negotiation regarding rules for behavior. But, consistent with the recommendation to be honest, adults should not hesitate to say what they believe

is absolutely essential and is not open to negotiation.

There may be some rules or limits set by parents that adolescents continue to violate because they are independent enough to do so. Parents may have to acknowledge that they cannot control what the adolescent does away from home but make clear that they will not allow it in the home and then follow through with that prohibition.

4. Remember that growing up means becoming independent. Effective parents, and other adults who succeed in helping adolescents become adults, are able to accept young people making choices that they would not have made and behaving in ways they do not approve of. That is what independence means. Young adults who still do as they are told all the time are immature and unprepared to face a world in which they are constantly required to decide for themselves. Most adolescents become adults who are a source of pride and happiness for their parents and for the other adults who worked with them. But for this to happen, they must first establish some independence, and that can require a painful break.

Adolescents undergo dramatic physical and mental changes in a short period of time, and they are given a confusing in-between place in our society. The period can be painful for the adolescents and for the adults who are close to them. But it is a necessary process both for the adolescents to come of age and for our society to renew itself through the questions, the new perspective, and the new talents that each group of young people brings into adulthood.

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Beyond the Birds and Bees

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Helping Parents Discuss Sex with Young Children

"Mommy!" a piercing voice echoes through the crowded supermarket. "Look at that lady! Why is her tummy so fat?"

Although questions like this do not always arise in supermarkets, young children do not restrict their curiosity about any aspect of human life or sexuality to the privacy of their homes. All too often parents who want to do a good job of answering their children's questions are caught off guard by a child who does not realize that parents find some subjects easier to discuss in nonpublic places. Even when a parent attempts to answer the initial question on the spot, children may persist:

"Mommy! *Why* is that lady's tummy so fat?"

"She has a little baby growing in her uterus."

"Why?" asks that insistent (and loud!) voice.

"I guess she thought it would be nice to have a baby to love and take care of."

"How will it get out of her?"

At this point most parents give up on the marketing and remove the child to the car, where they try to explain that babies are born through a special opening between the mother's legs called a vagina.

"Does it hurt the mommy?" the small questioner wants to know.

"Sometimes it hurts, but there is always a doctor or a daddy or a good friend with the mother who knows how to help her and the baby. And having a new baby is so exciting most mothers almost forget about the pain when they see a new little daughter or son."

By now the parent is beginning to feel more comfortable as she recalls previously rehearsed words and phrases. The child, however, is ready to move on to other issues. Questions such as "Can we stop at McDonald's?" or "Why do caterpillars go up in bumps when they crawl?" indicate that human sexuality is an interesting topic, but perhaps no more absorbing than many of the other practical and scientific aspects of life. The questions about babies and birth will come back again, and yet again, as the child grows older, absorbs information, and fits it into an ever-changing understanding of how the world works. As the child grows, parents expand their responses to questions, adapting their information and values to the ability of the child to understand and accept an increasingly mature view of sexuality. The following principles may provide some useful guidelines:

- There is no "one way" to discuss sex with children; there is especially no single "right" way. Even within the same family, parents will find themselves changing explanations and discussions to meet the special characteristics of individual children.
- Many parents feel inadequate as sex educators and wish that the school or a book, as an "expert", could do the job instead. However, it is the opinion of many professionals who work with families that parents—even when they stammer, blush, and

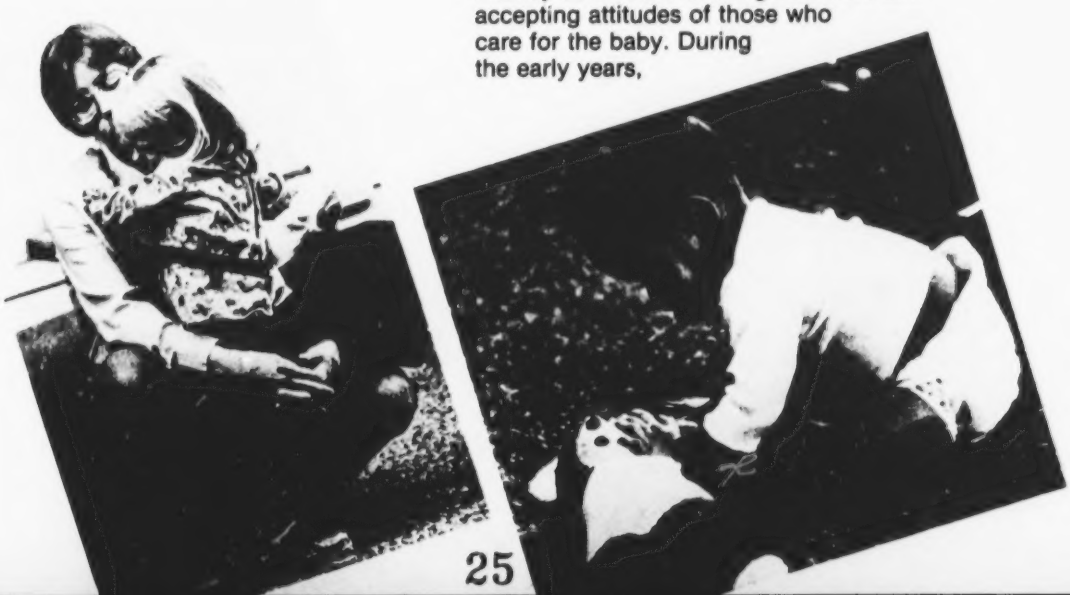
blunder—are uniquely qualified to respond sensitively to their children.

Children themselves often help their parents over rough spots in communicating about major issues, including human sexuality. Parents who say to their children, "I find it hard to explain this but let's give it a try," or "When I was little we couldn't talk about things like sex, but I really want to learn to talk with you about it," often find their children to be warm and sympathetic listeners, as well as skilled, insistent questioners. The essential characteristic of parents who want to be the primary sex educators of their children seems to be a willingness to try to communicate. How and what we say as parents is probably much less important than remaining open to, and unshocked by, the questions and comments of our children.

- An important beginning can be made by parents who take time to listen *carefully* to the questions. Most of us have enjoyed the story of the little girl who inquired, "Where did I come from?" and received from her mother a lengthy explanation of conception and birth ending with the question, "Now do you think you understand?" "No," said the child, "Susie comes from Buffalo, and Bobby comes from New York, but I still don't know where I came from!" Short, simple answers specifically directed to the question can avoid this kind of confusion!
- Young children's curiosity about human bodies and body functions is as matter-of-fact as their curiosity about anything else. Parents can provide factual answers to questions from very young children, reserving a discussion of ethics and morality until children are old enough to understand. Although parents are sometimes surprised when young children think that sexual behavior is funny, this reaction is not uncommon among children.
- Some of the common behaviors parents worry about in young children include masturbation, examining themselves and the bodies of their friends, preferring to be nude rather than dressed, and using sexual language in their play. Unless these behaviors are extreme, in that they occupy most of a child's waking hours, they should not be regarded as "problems".

Children acquire information about and attitudes toward sex whether or not their parents intend for them to do so. Friends, magazines, television, and the attitudes, conversation, and behaviors of adults they observe have a great influence on a child's emerging concept of sexuality. Parents can choose to provide their children with accurate information presented with respect and dignity, or they can allow their children to pick up the information and the misinformation that is all too widely available. It would be difficult indeed for any parent to prevent comments and impressions about sexual behavior from reaching a child in an American community. And it would be even more difficult to insure that healthy attitudes will occur without direct parental guidance and support.

Answering direct questions is only one of the ways in which parents impart information about sexuality to their children. Basic feelings of respect for the human body and an understanding of body functions may begin in infancy as a result of the gentle care and accepting attitudes of those who care for the baby. During the early years,



children learn labels for parts of the human body, usually checking their own bodies and often those of other people as they attempt to define the people who have breasts, or a penis, or other attributes indicating differences between male and female, child and adult. Many women have experienced a toddler's casual exploration of their breasts, and many men have been accompanied to the toilet by curious babies anxious to watch again the wonderful way in which males urinate.

Often the process of learning about human bodies includes doctor games in which one child is the patient and another is the examiner who pays particular attention to the patient's genitalia. Parents who discover such a game in progress often wonder how to react. "I don't want to make them feel guilty or bad because I know they're not really doing anything wrong, but I really don't want them to do that," seems to be a fairly common parental reaction. We would suggest that while it may be bewildering to a child if the parent exhibits shock, anger, or fear, it *is* appropriate for parents to react honestly, as for example, "I'd rather you kept your clothes on when you play together," or "People's bodies are private. We can find some books at the library and you can see how people are made by looking at the pictures," or "I want you to play something else — I don't feel comfortable about this game."

Parents who feel comfortable with the doctor game need not comment or interrupt except to insure that children will not hurt each other (as, for example, "giving shots" with sharp objects or introducing foreign objects into a body opening). Usually when the children's curiosity is satisfied they move on to other activities. Adult fears that information about sex will lead children to experiment with sexual activities do not seem to be borne out in real-life situations.

Other issues related to a child's understanding of human sexuality during the early years also raise questions in the minds of many parents. Sometimes a child encounters evidence of a mother's menstruation — tampons stored in an accessible place, for example, or stains on clothing. Some parents feel it is most appropriate to ignore or evade their child's questions. "That (tampon) is just something of mine. Please put it back where you found it," or "I guess I cut my finger and wiped it on the back of my skirt." These responses are often made by parents who feel preschoolers cannot or should not understand menstruation. Other parents report that they have tried some simple explanations that their children seem to understand and accept. For example, "That's called a tampon. Older girls and women put the soft little pad inside their vaginas when they menstruate." Sometimes, rather to the parent's surprise, children will say "Oh" and go off about their business. Sometimes a child will ask, "What's menstruate?" One mother answered, "Menstruation is the way a woman's body keeps a special place inside her uterus ready for a baby to grow. Every month a little bit of blood leaves her body through her vagina. It doesn't hurt her because it's not a bump or a cut. The blood carries away the old lining of the uterus. Each month a new lining starts to grow so that her uterus is always ready for a baby should one start to grow." Other parents have used part of this explanation, feeling that their children were not ready for it all.

One great benefit of a simple explanation of menstruation at an early age is that these children are usually very matter-of-fact and unsurprised, whereas an eight or nine year old who has never discussed it before may become difficult to talk with, giggly, or embarrassed. It would seem important for both parents to be informed about any explanation that has been given to a child so that clarification can follow if their child seems confused. Parents should also decide whether or not boys as well as girls should be included in any discussion of menstruation.

Evidence increasingly suggests that masturbation is engaged in by many healthy and mature adults. Babies delight in the discovery of their undiapered genitalia. Older babies examine their own bodies with great care and interest and soon find the sensitive areas that feel good when touched or rubbed. By two, many children have developed particular ways of acquiring pleasant physical sensations. Some rock back and forth on a pillow between their legs, or spend a good deal of time on a rocking horse, or fondle their genitalia before sleeping, or otherwise indicate that people learn early to obtain comfort and pleasure through self-stimulation. Parental attitudes toward these behaviors can influence children's feelings about themselves either as good people worthy of self-respect or as people who do "bad" and "dirty" things about

which they should feel guilty and ashamed. Although parents should not attempt to use any childrearing principle or technique that is at variance with their religious and moral standards, I believe young children are fortunate when they experience acceptance and understanding as they explore and fondle all parts of their bodies.

However, even the most understanding parents should not tolerate behavior that is embarrassing to them or other people. It would be appropriate for a parent to say privately to a child who is openly masturbating in the middle of the living room or in front of guests, "I know that touching yourself in that special way makes you feel good, but that's something people do in private. You can find a private place in your room." One mother recalled an episode with her three-year-old daughter and two-year-old son as they rode along the aisles in the supermarket cart. As they progressed past the vegetables she heard Betsy say, in loud and reproving tones, "Bobby, you know you're not 'sposed to hold your penis in public — wait 'til we get home to do that."

Young children have earned their reputation as the world's greatest imitators. If they see a machine, an animal, or a person participating in an interesting activity or making an interesting sound, they are quite likely to imitate in their play what they have seen or heard. Children may imitate adults they have seen or heard engaging in sexual activities or using sexual terms in their conversations, but this does not mean they have precocious sexual interests or will become deviant — or even "morally loose". It means that they are testing out new information and experiences, as they test out other phenomena they observe. Through play, children try to achieve a sense of mastery and accomplishment, which enables them to move on to other experiences and issues.

Often children raise questions about components of human sexuality that are difficult to answer. When this happens, the parents' intimate knowledge of the child, their understanding of the child's learning style, and their basic commitment to honest communication — even when it's hard—will usually help them deal sensitively with the questions. In a recent parent meeting, one mother reported that her four-year-old son had asked her what an abortion was. Other parents indicated that a television show had raised the same question among their children. Another parent told the group that her daughter had seen two men kissing each other on the street and had been told by a teenaged friend that they were "gay". The group agreed that children are encountering more varied and more puzzling human behaviors than previous generations and that the job of being a parent becomes more challenging with every new question.

Sometimes additional challenges seem to arise as children grow older. For example, parents of children approaching puberty often voice concern over the fact that feelings and experiences the family had earlier discussed openly and frankly are now no longer mentioned at all. The children who had accepted their own bodies and, perhaps, the nude bodies of family and friends, now begin to demand privacy. Bedroom and bathroom doors are firmly shut, and parents may even find themselves excluded from dressing rooms while shopping for a child's new clothes. Efforts by parents to talk about body changes or reproduction or love — or any other "embarrassing" topic — may be met with "Oh Dad-*dee*" or, what may seem worse, silence or withdrawal. When this happens parents may feel guilty, wonder what they did wrong, and try desperately to reestablish verbal communication about important issues with their child. At the very least, parents who feel they had been able to talk with a child at an earlier age feel disappointed. Sometimes parents feel afraid as they wonder what will happen during adolescence if they and their child "can't talk" now.

The fact that teenagers may not be verbally communicative with parents about sexual issues does not necessarily mean that parents have failed in their efforts to communicate. The teenager has not forgotten the discussions engaged in with parents in the past. The information and attitudes received from parents

may be being tested and tailored to fit the needs of an adolescent struggling to become an adult. Attitudes and values continue to be conveyed through the ways in which parents listen (or fail to listen) and respond to the feelings and behavior of others and exhibit feelings and behavior themselves. Children continue to need strong, loving support and sound information from parents during their teens. The challenge is to provide that support in ways that may be more subtle and more varied than those used previously.

In addition to hoping that their children have developed attitudes of liking and respect toward their own bodies, most parents hope also that their children will be able to respect the morality of others whose views may be different from their own. And, perhaps, because memories of their own teen years are still vivid, parents understand too well the adolescent need to behave in ways that are acceptable to one's peers.

It may be reassuring to know that several careful studies of adolescents in America indicate that some of the impressions we have received from public media about teenagers may be misleading. The teen years, while difficult, are not necessarily *more* difficult than other life stages. Also, most teenagers feel that their families are important to them and that the attitudes and values of their parents continue to influence them. A child entering adolescence does not suddenly become a different person, cut loose from parents. While some adolescents are troublesome, or troubled, or experimenting with activities that are unacceptable to adults, many deal with the pressures of growing up according to standards quite similar to those of their parents.

All of us hope our children will develop a sense of basic and enduring decency. Most of us hope also that our children will grow up proud of their own healthy bodies, respectful of the bodies and feelings of others, and able to move into a joyful sexual relationship with another loving adult. The attitudes, behavior, and expressed values of their parents have a profound effect on children. Adults who have felt inhibited, guilty, or ashamed of their own sexual inadequacies have often struggled hard and managed to communicate successfully with their children. These adults, who may also understand the value of sex education programs in schools, churches, and community groups, acknowledge their responsibility as the primary sex educators of their children. They are among the many parents who acknowledge that communicating with their children about human sexuality can be funny, scary, hard, bewildering, illuminating, fun — and very important.

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Off to a Good Beginning: Getting Ready for Kindergarten

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So your child starts kindergarten this fall! You're probably feeling proud, yet sad, over the growth, learning, and good times that have already slipped by. It is this very feeling of yours that can be a first step in helping to prepare your child for school.

By focusing on your feelings about this family change, you can sharpen your sensitivity to your child's feelings and be able to plan effectively for the big day. By expressing your joys and fears, you become a role model for your child, encouraging open communication and building a sense of confidence and trust.

Years ago, kindergarten was the first school experience for most youngsters. Now, more and more children have been cared for out of their home before kindergarten, in day care centers, play groups, and nursery schools. However, even for these more experienced children, kindergarten is still a giant step in their lives.

What makes this difference? Why do we all recognize kindergarten as so important?

Preschool centers are planned to extend the kind of individualized, personal, family-oriented care given to children by parents at home, while kindergarten is part of real school, the main institution, in addition to the family, created to help children meet the requirements of society.

The community, through the long-range goals it sets, outlines the nature of the school experience in bold strokes. Children begin to learn their roles as citizens and to acquire the increasingly complex skills they will need in the future. In this way, the community sets standards for its children, and in kindergarten children begin the process of being evaluated on their abilities in school.

Wonderfully, most children are ready and eager for this new challenge. Kindergarten and five-years-olds really "click."

Why is this so?

Fives are rugged! They clamber to the top of the slide, to the top of the jungle-gym; they're "King of the Mountain." They like real work, moving desks, rearranging chairs, mopping the floor. This hearty approach to life also carries over into mental activities. They are curious about their world, and they explore it with vigor.

Fives are pleased with their home and family, and they expect to like their teacher. They visit around the neighborhood and enjoy "sleeping over" at a friend's house. Fives have an easy-going sense of themselves as people, and this makes for comfortable, forthright friendships. When two friends meet, a plan for play develops naturally with mutual

understanding, and they work together cheerfully. If one child asks, "Whose painting is best?" the other may answer, "They're both the best."

Fives are happy with life. They are competent at preschool tasks and not yet involved in those reading and writing skills that will demand further visual and fine muscle development. They have acquired a good vocabulary, and they love rhymes, riddles, and jokes. They use their language skills to communicate and to socialize. They are balanced, calm, and self-directed.

All parents ponder over their child's first day at school. Is she ready? Will he do well? Is the program right for her? Will he be happy? Fortunately, parents have far-ranging influences on these questions. Some of these influences have been developing for a long time.

Psychologist Erik Erikson ascribes three of his eight stages of development to the years before kindergarten. The infant's first relationships develop a sense of *trust* (or mistrust). The toddler, who has an awakening sense of self and separateness, demands a new *autonomy* as he begins to walk and communicate (or he may grow to doubt himself). The preschooler likes to act on her environment, playing, socializing, drawing, counting, wondering. She is ready for support as she develops her *initiative* (rather than a sense of guilt). By five the child often says, "I can do it for myself!"

Parents encourage healthy development through these stages by their affection, their caring, and their ability to "let go" at the right times. In this way, parents are helping to create the self-esteem and confidence that a child will need when entering the world of school.

Planning Ahead for School

In the spring

Select the school. All families have goals for children that affect educational planning and determine the kind of schooling they hope to find. Do visit the schools available in your community, and select the one that best meets your goals.

Plan your visits. Make an appointment with the principal and have your questions ready. Inform yourself about new educational methods—after all, the school should not be just like the one you went to a generation before!

- Is the school bright, clean, and friendly? (Newness doesn't matter.)
- Are the adults cheerful?
- Are parents welcome and encouraged to visit?

Our knowledge of child development tells us that young children learn best when they can be physically active, when "hands-on" activities are provided, and when they are encouraged to learn through a variety of materials and experiences. There should be cooperation and social interaction between children and mutual respect between children and teachers. Most important of all, joy and competence should be present in the child's workplace.

You may not have a choice of schools, and you may not see the perfect setting. If this happens, remember two things:

- Citizens and parents can have a positive effect on changing schools;
- Parents can foster the natural strength youngsters have for enjoying and profiting from less-than-perfect experiences. They can listen, be sympathetic (but not pitying), and have confidence in the courage children can bring forth to make the best of a less-than-perfect situation. In addition, parents have always been the child's most important teachers and will continue in this role as they are needed.

Two Special Cases

Occasionally, a five-year-old does not seem ready for school, or a preschool teacher may suggest waiting another year. On the other hand, a teacher or parent may fear a child will be bored in kindergarten, especially if the child can already read. If you have doubts about your child's readiness, discuss it with your preschool teacher, doctor, or school principal. Friends and relatives may also help you with this decision.

If a child is not ready, "maturity" may be the problem. The children whose birthday comes in the autumn—that is, who are still 4 or close to 4—actually are younger. Waiting a year may make success in school more certain for these children. However, if capability or lack of experience is the cause of not being ready, kindergarten may be just what will help the most. These children should probably not delay beginning school.

The child who already reads should not "skip" kindergarten for that reason. Good schools supply rich environments, and experiences are many and varied during the kindergarten year. The skills of creating, using imagination, learning independence, and being a good friend all develop in kindergarten—and kindergarten is not boring! When Eric started school, his mother explained that he especially loved to read books. Later when he didn't wish to rest, his teacher suggested getting a good book. Eric exclaimed, "Oh no, I'm not ever going to read in kindergarten! I have lots of books at home. Here I'm just going to do all the other things."

Kindergarten was made for fives, and generally it should be neither skipped nor postponed. To have this bridge between the home-centered preschool years and a school career which stretches from twelve to sixteen or even twenty years into the future is every child's right.

When you have decided on a school, make a visit with your child. The water fountain, the high slide, the echoing gym will all fascinate your youngster. If he will use the school bus, be sure that the two of you watch the children getting on for the homeward trip. All these experiences will help evoke images for the child to use over the summer when thinking about and playing school.

Summer Plans

Planning and making necessary preparations early in the summer will make the big day as relaxed and free of tension as possible.

1. Visit the doctor, dentist, and eye doctor early in the summer, but without equating this with school. These visits are just sound health practices, which are appropriate at this time.

- Help your youngster learn her whole name, address, and telephone number and what to do if you get home late one day.

2. Learning to be a friend is important for your child. Caring, sharing, and cooperation come with practice. Encourage your child to invite a friend for lunch or a family outing for a fine summer activity.

3. Make no promises, but talk and wonder together about school. Read some good books about school and tell your own stories about the "old days" when you went to school.

4. Help your child understand about time at school. Many children are crushed to find they can't read the very first day! They need assurance that all teachers and children are different and that there is no magic time for learning.

5. Schedules may change when school starts. Get a head start by adjusting bedtime and mealtime if this will be necessary. If you have a new job requiring additional day care for your child, start that routine a month early to allow

time for adapting to the change, so school and day care don't both begin at once.

6. Independence increases with school. A child who must share an adult with many children needs both patience and a few self-help skills.

- Practice tying sneakers and shoes. A mark on all right shoes will help tell "which foot."
- Buy clothes with your child. Are the buttons and zippers easy? Can she get the sweater over her head and the boots over the new shoes?
- After picking out the "best" lunch box or school bag, put on a visible name or special symbol. Imagine how many children pick the same "best" lunch box!
- Label everything—where it shows. This helps the child and shows your respect for and cooperation with the school.

7. Practice using money. Plan a safe way to carry money, and give your child the experience of paying for a treat, a newspaper, or school supplies. Children like to know the names of the small coins needed at school.

8. Close to the opening of school, pay a visit to your child's teacher and classroom, so he will know his room. When you introduce the teacher to your youngster, you give the teacher your personal "stamp of approval."

Provide encouragement and opportunities for learning the above skills, but do not feel that these goals must be reached before school. Children learn different skills at different rates. Often—if opportunities are available—the passage of time will make the learning possible, especially if tensions and pressures do not cause the child to lose interest. Each child's greatest asset for school is a jaunty self-confidence and feeling of being "on top of the world" about the new adventure.

Suddenly, that seemingly far-distant day is here! Parents say proudly but tearfully, "My child's not a baby anymore."

On the big day, make simple plans for your child—a name tag to wear, a favorite toy to take (if this is OK with the school), and knowledge of what to do. Also, be sure your child knows what you expect to do. Will you walk to the bus together, or will you take your child to school? Does the teacher invite mothers into the room or have them leave at the door? Discuss these things casually, and then be prepared! Many children who talked all summer about running to the bus alone change their mind halfway down the sidewalk on the fateful day, while the shy ones skip off with nary a backward look at a crestfallen parent. One small friend on her way to school whispered in her daddy's ear, "This is my lucky day!"

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Cornell Cooperative Extension — Helping You Put Knowledge to Work.

Infants and Parents

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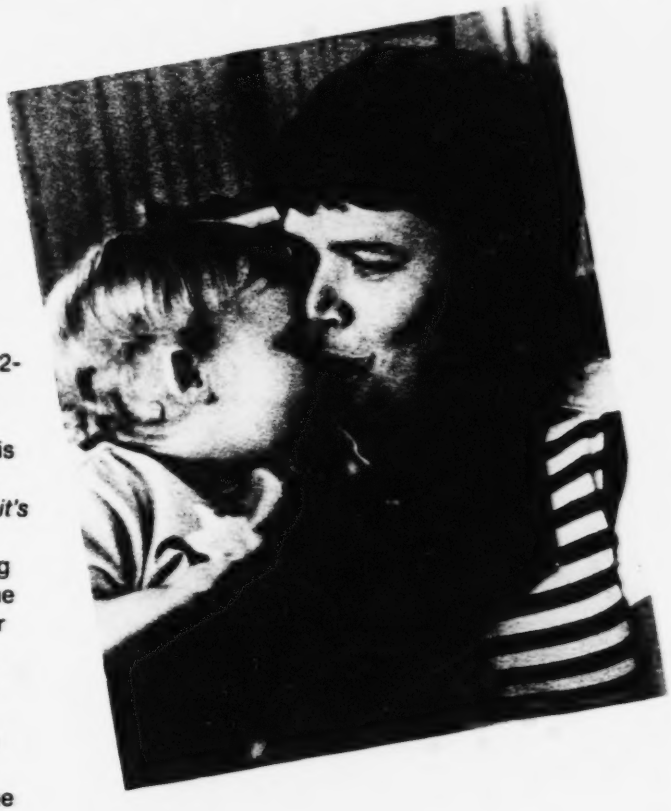

Is This Normal?

I asked a group of experienced parents of 2-year-olds: What should parents know about their new babies? There were surprisingly quick and impassioned replies: "That crying is alright; that not all babies sleep through the night at 3 months; that the year passes; *that it's normal*, that it's all normal."

For a new parent, the stress of not knowing if a particular behavior is "normal" adds to the ordinary stress of caring for a new infant. For example, responding to a baby's cries in the middle of the night for 6 months sometimes leads to real and debilitating exhaustion. Worrying that there is something wrong with the baby or that the baby is "different" from others may add a psychological burden to the very real physical one. The frequency with which some babies spit up is perhaps unpleasant. If the baby is losing weight or if there is some other indication that the spitting up is not in the range of normal, it can become an "issue" and cause severe strain during feedings.

Certainly some infant behavior is not normal and deserves prompt and special attention. For example, a baby who is not yet rolling over or who fails to hold her head steady when she is held in a sitting position at 4 months ought to be seen by a professional who can evaluate the situation and determine if corrective measures are needed. A pediatrician or a public health nurse are two such professionals who consult with parents who are concerned about a baby's physical development. Many developmental screening clinics have been established nationwide expressly for the early detection and treatment of developmental delays. These clinics are helpful both by indicating treatment that will aid development and by offering support and information to families when an infant's responses are delayed.

Much of the behavior that concerns parents and caregivers of young babies, however, is normal. It is simply not *average* behavior. The average child will begin to walk alone at 12 to

14 months. It is quite normal, however, for a child to begin to walk at 8 to 10 months or 15 to 17 months. A child who is not making any attempt to walk at 17 months, however, ought to be seen by a professional. His behavior is falling outside the normal range. The accompanying chart will help parents gauge whether their babies are developing normally. Notice that there is a broad age range during which any particular behavior may begin and still be considered normal.

Babies, like the rest of us, develop at their own pace.

What Is Your Baby Telling You?

Luckily for us and for them, babies in their first months of life can communicate what they want or need. Some are more vocal and clever about this than others. One of the most difficult but gratifying jobs of a new parent is helping to make a baby's communication a success; parents can do this by learning to respond as sensitively as possible, while trying not to substitute their own feelings for those of the baby. To make things even more difficult, the message and the mode of communication change many times as a baby grows older and develops. Parents and other caregivers of young children need to be alert to the many new cues that appear.

How Do Babies Communicate?

The most common communication of an infant, of course, is crying. Infants differ from one another both in the amount of crying that they do and in the intensity of their cries. Studies of sleep and crying patterns show that crying changes dramatically during the first 3 to 4 months of life as the time a baby is awake during the day increases. The amount of crying babies do usually increases from the 2nd week of life and begins to decrease again by the 3rd or 4th month. Babies up to 3 to 4 months are expected to cry a good deal because of a greater accumulation of tension that otherwise would be resolved in sleep. Crying usually decreases somewhat after the 4th month.

For very young babies being put to the breast or offered a bottle, being securely held in loving arms will generally stop the crying immediately. Being held brings blissful relief. For somewhat older babies, this may not be the only solution. As babies reach 5 to 6 months, they may not always need food or snuggling. A change of position or a diversion, such as the sight of a new brightly colored fabric, may be the answer. The baby may need a change of atmosphere, such as being moved into another room or away from people and stimulation (the response to overstimulation is often increased crying). Naturally, if the baby continues to communicate dissatisfaction with anything but another feeding, the explanation is obvious: she is hungry after all. But don't be afraid to experiment with other diversions before you feed her. Although some babies seem quite impatient, even they will allow you a few minutes to experiment with different solutions.

After these first 5 to 6 very dependent months, your baby may begin to signal new needs in new ways. Squirming in the infant seat or when you are cuddling him may mean, "I could use a little more space now." Your ability to understand this, perhaps by putting him down on the carpet, shows respect for his individuality and his communication to you. This move toward independence is understandably difficult for some parents and caregivers who have enjoyed the close contact of those early months. For others, it may be a welcome relief.

Later on at 7, 8, or 9 months, your baby may want to take the initiative in feeding. She will communicate this by trying to forcefully take the spoon away, or by reaching into the container or jar you are holding. At 12 months, your baby may even refuse to accept food from the spoon when you are holding it. When you do give her the spoon, she is likely to make quite a mess of things. Your cooperation in meeting her need to help herself, however, says something important to her. When you say, "Okay, here's another spoon, you can help," or "Here are some finger foods that you can try putting in your mouth," you are really saying "I approve of your efforts to master the world, and I'm going to try to make it a little easier for you."

Listening to young babies' nonverbal signs and signals is challenging though sometimes frustrating. The effort to understand the communication and your resulting success in

Characteristics	Most Babies First Do This Between
Handling the Whole Body	
Holds head off bed for a few moments while lying on stomach	Birth and 4 weeks
Holds head upright while lying on stomach	5 weeks and 3 months
Holds head steady when held in sitting position	6 weeks and 4 months
Rolls over from front to back, or from back to front	2 months and 4 months
Sits without support when placed in a sitting position	5 months and 8 months
Gets into sitting position in crib or on floor	6 months and 11 months
Takes part of weight on own legs when held steady	3 months and 8 months
Stands holding-on	5 months and 10 months
Stands for a moment alone	9 months and 13 months
Stands alone well	10 months and 14 months
Walks holding on to furniture	7½ months and 13 months
Walks alone across a room	11 months and 17 months
Using Hands and Eyes	
Follows an object with eyes for a short distance	Birth and 6 weeks
Follows with eyes from one side all the way to the other side of head	2 months and 4 months
Brings hands together in front	6 weeks and 3½ months
Grasps a rattle placed in fingers	2½ months and 4½ months
Passes a toy from one hand to the other	5 months and 7½ months
Grasps a small object (like a raisin) off a flat surface	5 months and 8 months
Picks up a small object using thumb and finger	7 months and 10 months
Brings together two toys held in hands	7 months and 12 months
Tries to get a toy that is out of reach	5 months and 9 months
Uses a spoon, spills little	13 months and 24 months
Scribbles with a pencil or crayon	12 months and 24 months
Using Ears and Voice	
Pays attention to sounds	Birth and 6 weeks
Makes vocal sounds other than crying	Birth and 6 weeks
Laughs	6 weeks and 3½ months
Squeals	6 weeks and 4½ months
Turns toward the sound of your voice	4 months and 8 months
Says "Dada" or "Mama"	6 months and 10 months
Uses Dada or Mama to mean one specific person	10 months and 14 months
Imitates the speech sounds you make	6 months and 11 months
Interacting with People	
Looks at your face	Birth and 1 month
Smiles when you smile or play with her	Birth and 2 months
Smiles on own	6 weeks and 5 months
Pulls back when you pull a toy in his hands	4 months and 10 months
Feeds self crackers	5 months and 8 months
Drinks from a cup without help	10 months and 16 months
Plays with a ball on the floor	10 months and 16 months
Plays peekaboo	6 months and 10 months
Plays pat-a-cake	7 months and 13 months

doing so, however, often lead to a very special relationship between the two of you.

Babies Have Different Styles

Babies seem to differ in physical and temperamental characteristics right from birth. These characteristics can influence the way others comfort and play with them and can determine how much attention they get. We know, for example, that physically active babies easily engage a casual passerby in play; a quieter baby may more often depend on a caring adult making a special effort to stimulate him. Active babies often need to be held for a while to calm down before going to sleep. Quieter babies more easily comfort themselves to sleep. Babies who cry loudly may get comforted more quickly than babies who whimper, but they also may eventually engender more anger from an adult who feels "pushed around" by the baby's demands. Some babies are very sensitive to sound or light and need more holding and soothing. Other babies seem not to notice the din of the crowd; they even may seek out more intense stimulation. Many babies keep particularly regular eating and sleeping schedules. Others have no obvious rhythm.

One can readily see how parents, with their own particular styles, and babies, with theirs, may have difficulty adjusting to each other. A quiet parent may find a very loud or active baby more than was bargained for. A parent who enjoys traveling around or visiting friends might prefer to have a baby who does not require a rigid schedule of eating and sleeping; yet she might find herself with a baby who protests loudly at any deviation from a regular routine. An active roughhousing parent may be puzzled and perhaps disappointed by a baby who prefers to stare at his own toes for a long time or who screams with terror when thrown in the air. A parent who has looked forward to cuddling her very own baby may feel quite rejected if she finds herself with a "noncuddler" who holds herself away from her mother's body.

Observing babies and understanding that they are born with these and many other individual characteristics can help parents modify their own responses to be in the best interests of the baby and the family. Rather than taking the baby's behavior personally (he doesn't love me, he's trying to get me), more creative solutions can be found that both suit the parent's temperament and are sensitive to the baby's needs. An older sibling or cousin may be invited to play with and stimulate a quieter baby, if the parent himself does not enjoy this. A noncuddler may enjoy back rubs or lying in bed with the parent. An easily distracted baby may learn to play alone for longer periods of time if placed in quiet surroundings.

The key to good care for infants lies in the ability of the people who care for them to know themselves and their babies, and to arrive at comfortable ways of accommodating their personal characteristics to the particular characteristics of the baby. Dr. T. Berry Brazelton sums it up in his book *Toddlers and Parents:*

> *In the 1950s there was still a pervading belief that the outcome of a child's personality development was entirely the responsibility of his parents. We know now that it's not that simple. Parents do not need to be loaded with helpless guilt, anticipating the errors they will make with their child. By implying that all responsibility is on parents we are saying that unless parents find the one right way, any mistake they make will ruin the child. This creates a heavy burden of guilt for a parent who cares. My own conviction is that each child is born with particular strengths and marked individuality. These individual differences influence the parents and all people around the child as much as they, in turn, will affect him or her. No parent ever feels the same about two children, for each child calls up a different set of responses. Because of these strengths, and a resilient individuality, a child can absorb a great many mistakes on his parents' part. Hence my best advice would be: when in doubt, follow the child!**

**T. Berry Brazelton, *Toddlers and Parents* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1974).

What Do Babies Do?

Infant development proceeds in a generally orderly manner from simple, whole body movements, such as turning over, to increasingly refined actions, such as reaching for a specific object. Each physical feat accomplished seems to lay the foundation for a new, more complex skill. Raising the head and shoulders from the mattress or carpet must come before crawling. Random swinging at objects precedes reaching for a toy in a visually directed way. This directed reaching precedes the practiced eye/hand coordination necessary to feed oneself, and so on. As babies gain more control over their bodies, they are better able to explore their surroundings, and they do so with great enthusiasm. To many parents, it appears that the baby has been lying around plotting for 7 months on just how to get to that tissue box or that open jar of Vaseline. It is important to allow babies to use their intense curiosity, to experience the world through their bodies, and to learn through their muscles.

The sounds that babies make change during the first year as well. In addition to the cry, there appears to be a cooing sound at 6 to 8 months. And the more the parent talks to the baby, the more he seems to coo. Later still in that first year, the baby begins to babble. He seems to delight in hearing himself and stares intently at your lips as you imitate him or produce some similar, delightful utterance. As young as 8 or 9 months, children begin to understand some of the words that they hear. They will enjoy sitting with a parent who names the familiar objects in a first book. Some children will say their first words at only a year old. Others will not really begin to talk until they are close to 2 years old.

The baby's play moves from a random reaching out to more intentional movements. For a long time all objects are explored in the mouth; later, they are turned around in many directions and banged on the floor and on each other, no matter what their intended function. As the baby gains better control of her hands, the play becomes more precise. Cups are grasped correctly and spoons are used for early attempts at self-feeding. Books are pulled off shelves. Delight is taken in nibbling corners, but also in turning pages.

How does the baby react to people during this first year of life? He begins to smile at almost everyone and then more often at the special people in his life. During the first 6 months the baby and parents are getting to know one another and are developing a mutual and strong attachment. Playing together and attending to the baby's needs and cues are important aspects of growing to love one another. From 6 months on the baby begins to seek proximity to his parents, wanting to be constantly close or to be able to touch base.

He may become distressed if the parent moves away too quickly or disappears from view. Talking to a baby and maintaining voice contact helps to alleviate some of this distress.

During the first year of life, babies move from dependence to increasing independence. When a baby's early dependency needs are met, we think that she is more likely to feel secure enough to venture away from the parent later on and to try things on her own. The first year is a critical period when babies need to feel safe and to feel confident about having their needs met. When this happens consistently, we believe that the baby learns to anticipate satisfaction and that basic trust is established.

Changing Lifestyles

What is happening to infants now that many mothers are away from their young babies because of employment? Research has shown that babies who spend much of their day in quality day care settings develop the same healthy bonding to parents as do infants who are cared for at home. Babies in day care settings also appear to be aware of and interact with other babies as early as 9 months of age. Quality care for young babies is, unfortunately, still hard to find, and the results of poor or haphazard child care arrangements are not yet known. There is some reason to believe that with more mothers working, infants may satisfy some of their needs with fathers, peers, and substitute caregivers.

Becoming a Parent

Any major change in one's life is difficult and challenging. New parenthood is this kind of change. Parenting is not a science. The body of knowledge about childrearing appears to change frequently, often in response to perceived or real changes in the larger society. Being a parent takes time, reflection, support, and information. Parents sometimes seek outside help in an effort to make the transition to parenthood easier and to increase feelings of confidence and self-esteem in their new role. The help may come from friends, relatives, or health service professionals. Forming supportive groups with other parents for this purpose is also not a new phenomenon. Child study groups and other parent networks have been in existence for more than a century.

Struggling with feelings of confusion, fear, and insecurity is natural in any human growth process. It is important that new parents allow themselves time to get to know their baby, experience the joy that comes from finding their own solutions to problems, and discover their own way of living together as a family.

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Resources for Parents and Others Who Care about Children

Teen/Parent Communication

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Cornell Cooperative Extension

Parent: **Who do you think you are getting home at this hour? Just where have you been?**

Teen: **Out.**

Parent: **Out! Out! Out where?**

Teen: **Just out.**

Parent: **I'm sorry, young man, just out won't do. When I ask you a civil question, I expect a civil answer.**

Teen: **Why don't you just leave me alone? Why are you always in my business trying to run my life? Would you please just get off my back?**

This kind of dialogue between a parent and a teenager is not an uncommon occurrence. It is frequently referred to as the generation gap. In this situation, the parent set a negative mood in first approaching the teenager, putting the young person immediately on the defensive. In turn, the parent may have overreacted because of the evasive response of the latecomer. The parent and the adolescent have backed themselves into separate corners. Neither knows where to go from there, except possibly to come out fighting. This apparent loss of control can leave the parent feeling frightened and helpless, looking for ways to temper the emotionally explosive situation and make the communication constructive. In this instance, a possible next step for the parent might be to say: "Just a minute. I think both of us are getting angry and may say the wrong thing. Why don't we both take some time to get our thoughts together and come back to this issue in the morning?" This approach allows a cooling-off period, but it must be followed up. It can't be used as a way for parent or child to avoid the situation!

Keeping Communication Open

It is not unusual for parents of teenagers to feel despair and frustration over their seeming inability to communicate with their children.

Maturing adolescents need independence and the right to choose and make their own decisions. Some decisions are simple, such as the type of clothing to wear. Other decisions are more momentous, such as career choices. Parents can and should help their adolescents think through decisions, but, at the same time, they must remember that becoming an adult means making one's own decisions. In the move toward adulthood, the adolescent comes to grips with many issues and much information that must be taken in, sifted, tried out, and checked out with peer groups, adults, and the larger community as well as with parents.

In view of all the physical and emotional changes the normal adolescent has to deal with, how can a parent keep open the lines of communication? There are some indications that in families where group activities are common, there is usually good communication between adolescents and parents. But it should not be assumed that the family that plays together is necessarily going to communicate together. An early history of family discussions may help to promote teen/parent communication, but this does not ensure success forever. Many parents sadly report that the open communication they enjoyed with their young children does not continue through the teen years. Happily, some of these same parents report that the lull is a temporary one. It is important to remember that children of all ages are always sending messages—verbal and nonverbal, negative, positive, or just plain unclear. A mumbled phrase, a slammed door, truancy from school, or a child touching a parent are all forms of communication. The parent's role is to decode these messages and to reach out in ways that keep the doors to positive communication open.

As parents learn to read the messages their adolescent children send, they should understand that the relationship of an adolescent to a parent and a parent to an adolescent is, at best, an ambivalent one. It is not unusual for parents to have conflicting feelings about their children growing up. They may take pride in a child's growth and accomplishments, but the maturing of an adolescent often means that the child will be leaving home soon, always a difficult transitional time for parents. Parents are proud of their adolescent's increasing capacity to take on new responsibilities, but they also are anxious about their teenager driving the car, about weekends away from home, and about losing influence over their offspring.

The sexuality of adolescent children also can be a point of ambivalence. Although parents want their children to be socially acceptable, most parents don't want their children to be sexually active. Teenagers have a great deal of information and misinformation about sex and sexuality. They are exposed to more sexual stimuli from movies, television, and magazines than ever before, and they need parental help to develop positive, healthy attitudes toward what they see, hear, and feel. Sex and sexuality can be presented as part of a wholesome and normal loving relationship, but parents have to work hard to communicate this attitude to an adolescent.

Learning to Listen

Parents foster good communication by setting a good example. Adolescents often criticize adults for saying one thing and meaning or doing another. Children learn their parents' values both directly and indirectly. They may reason: "What is wrong with drinking beer or wine, when parents get high on liquor?" Parents who *listen* to their children's ideas and points of view establish opportunities for constructive communication.

Teen: Dad, did you hear me when I came in last night?

Parent: No, but I think your mom was awake.

Teen: I was pretty drunk when I got home.

Parent: What happened?

Teen: Well, after the movie, someone suggested we stop for something to eat. We stopped for pizza and some of the kids got some six-packs of beer. I guess I had one too many.

Parent: How do you feel now?

Teen: Pretty lousy.

Parent: Lousy sick or lousy about drinking?

Teen: Lousy sick.

Parent: Drinking too much can make a person sick. I guess that's one reason why I think it might be better if kids your age didn't drink.

This parent listened carefully without attacking or berating the teenager's behavior. Listening is the foundation of communication between people, regardless of their ages. To communicate effectively, you must first hear what the other person is saying. Finding time to talk when the adolescent is ready and willing and giving undivided parental attention is hard to do but very important. Parents need to listen calmly, concentrating on what their child is saying without interrupting or making judgments. After listening carefully, parents can provide more information about how they feel about drinking and suggest ways the adolescent could deal with peers who do drink and who put pressure on others to drink.

Parents need to learn to listen between the lines. Adolescents don't always speak directly and we often have to listen with a "third ear" to understand the feelings behind the words. It is not uncommon for an adolescent to ask a parent a "what if" question. For example, the question "What if I moved out of the house?" might indicate that the teenager wants to know how the family would feel, or it could mean that the child wants to know what is needed emotionally and economically to be independent enough to move out. An insensitive response to this question could lead to an argument between parent and child. For example, "You'd better not move out" or, "If you go you're not coming back" or, "If you think I'm going to support you out of this house you're crazy," may not encourage fruitful communication. On the other hand, "We would miss you a lot. Why do you ask?" may allow parent and teen to explore their feelings about living together or apart.

Helping Teenagers Make Decisions

Adolescents have ambivalent feelings about their parents just as parents have mixed feelings about their adolescents. Although growing up means freedom and independence, it also means responsibility and giving up the special privileges of childhood. Very often adolescents expect to be treated as either adults or children at whim. Adolescents can be erratic in using

their independence. They will often ask parents for advice or even to make decisions for them and then, almost in the same breath, tell parents not to interfere in their affairs.

Each teenager is in search of a personal identity. Although young people may not be sure what they want to be, they may know that they don't want to be a chip off the old block. This may lead to some of the disobedience, defiance, and rebellion that so many parents fear.

Teen: Mom, what do you think of this dress? Do you think it will look good on me?

Parent: Oh dear, it's lovely, it's you. Try it on. I bet it will look absolutely great.

Teen: It's a rag. I hate it. I wouldn't be caught dead in it.

This behavior may be extremely contrary, but it also is absolutely normal.

A family's attitude toward money is important. Children need to understand family values and to know how family income is spent. Some parents involve children in financial decisions or teach them money management skills by giving them an allowance at an early age. During adolescence, a family can discuss the teenager's monetary needs and perhaps use a budget of itemized needs to set an appropriate allowance. When young people reach adolescence, they can be encouraged to work after school and during summers to gain experience in earning and managing their own money.

Adolescents want to decide how late to stay up or stay out, select the clothing they will wear, and choose their friends. On the other hand, they depend on parents for the car, and for money for clothing, sports equipment, and dates and other activities.

The role of the parent during this growing-up period is to supervise, to listen, and to guide. Although adolescents are capable of handling a lot of freedom, privileges, and responsibility, they still need help in setting limits for themselves in many areas. Deciding *with* an adolescent the rules surrounding particular issues usually brings forth a more reasonable attitude. After the teenager's feelings have been expressed, parents can express their own viewpoints plainly and honestly, giving direct answers to direct questions. When parents don't know the answer, they should say so and ask their child for help in finding the answer. Adolescents need and want limits and supervision; they will, however, rebel against having to account for every minute of their time.

Teen (age 14): Mom, I would like to go to Debbie's party on Saturday night.

Parent: I have to think about it. I'll give you a definite answer tomorrow morning before you leave for school. Check with me then.

Teen (the next day): Well, Mom, can I go?

Parent: I've checked with Debbie's Mom and it seems like a lovely party. You may go if you wish.

Be Supportive

Many teenagers become preoccupied with unanswerable questions, the fragility of life, and the inevitability of death. It is difficult for them to understand that their anxieties and doubts are universal and that what pains and confuses them pains and confuses all of us. Anna Freud has said that:

It is normal for an adolescent to behave in an inconsistent and unpredictable manner, to fight his impulses and to accept them; to love his parents and to hate them; to be deeply ashamed to acknowledge his mother before others and unexpectedly, to desire heart to heart talks with her; to thrive on imitation of and identification with others while searching unceasingly for his own identity; to be more idealistic, artistic, generous, and unselfish than he will ever be

*again, but also the opposite: self-centered, egotistic, calculating. Such fluctuations between extreme opposites would be deemed highly abnormal at any other time of life. At this time they may signify no more than that an adult structure of personality takes a long time to emerge, that the ego of the individual in question does not cease to experiment and is in no hurry to close down on possibilities.**

The best stance that the parent can take is to be supportive of an adolescent child without being too understanding. Adolescents believe that what they are feeling is being felt for the first time and they may be insulted when they hear a parent say, "I know exactly how you feel. When I was your age I felt exactly the same way." The hard lesson for parents at this stage in their child's development is that no matter how wise they are as parents, they can't be correct for any length of time in the eyes of their children.

Nagging, sarcasm, preaching, or laughing at an adolescent can cut off communication. Sentences that begin with "How come," and "You should" can block the expression of feeling. "Can you tell me about" or "I have some strong feelings I need to share with you," accompanied by an attitude of respect and trust, are likely to be more effective.

Adolescents will not confide in parents if we are always critical or if we overreact to their behavior. When a youngster becomes a teenager, many parents gird themselves for the struggle and overreact when their children first "step out-of-line." They may punish too severely, withdraw trust, lose confidence in the teen, or resort to other actions that cut the lines of communication. Although we don't have to and shouldn't condone negative behavior or attitudes, it is important to accept an adolescent's feelings. Young people need to know where parents stand on issues and why they stand where they do. Adolescents are often insecure in their decision making and need to know what a parent expects. Some expectations can be stated as preferences, thus allowing the young person room to choose and negotiate; other expectations are family rules that stand firm. Children are shaped by their experiences with people and situations. It is not possible for parents to teach character traits directly; character education requires that

the parent be a demonstrative, communicative adult. People learn what they live and become what they experience.

Most parents want their children to grow into people with compassion, commitment, and courage, and people whose lives are guided by a core of strength and a code of fairness. To help their children mature in this way, parents will have to remember that:

*A day comes in any parent's life when there is a sudden realization: "My child is a child no longer." This is a unique moment of elation and fear. . . . No longer can we stand between him and the world to shield him from life's dangers. From now on he must face unavoidable challenges unaccompanied by us. . . .This can be our finest hour. To let go when we want to hold on requires utmost generosity and love. Only parents are capable of such painful greatness.**

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Found and Scrounged: Creating Environments for Young Children's Play

by Jennifer Birckmayer
with Andrea Glick

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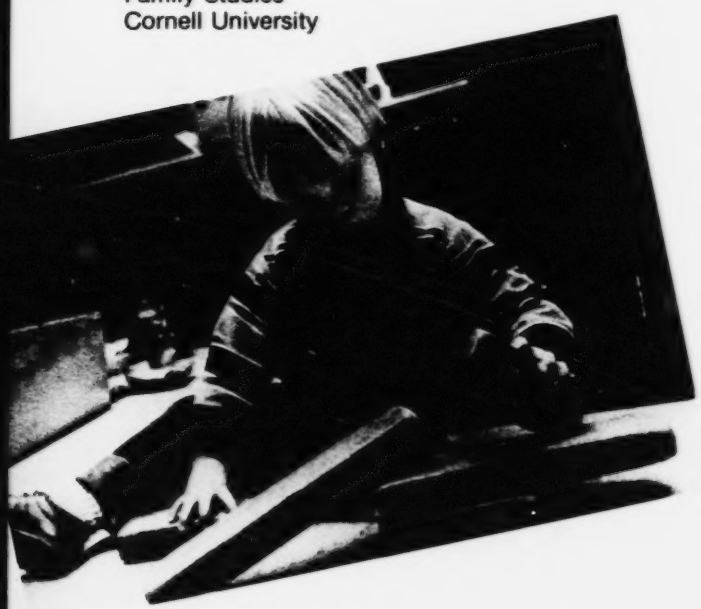

Settings for the play of young children can be as varied and exciting as the people who use them. Play is almost always richer, more productive, and more sustained when play materials are thoughtfully selected, appropriately arranged, and carefully maintained.

> *Space communicates with people—in a very real sense tells us how to act and how not to act. What it tells us to do is related to what is in the space and how these things are arranged and organized.**

We live in a world—and in physical spaces—dominated by adult needs and interests. The misbehavior of children may sometimes result from the fact that the furniture and the objects surrounding it are not intended for the exploration and experimentation that are so important in the lives of healthy children. By providing activities that are appropriate for young children, adults can communicate to children what *to* do, rather than forever telling them what *not* to do. If the adults in charge will share some time, space, and imagination, waiting rooms, offices, libraries, and Sunday schools can include rich and varied opportunities for play. A little ingenuity and a lot of scrounging can result in a truly exciting play environment.

Whether adults are arranging for children's play in homes, schools, or day care centers, a few guidelines may be useful.

- Play materials need not be expensive, but they should be chosen for versatility, durability, and as props for stimulating the imagination. Good play material requires children to act or think and is more instructive than an entertaining toy, which demands only that children watch it.
- Arrangement and storage of play materials are as important as the materials themselves. A doll bed with a doll comfortably tucked under an assortment of pretty fabric scraps is more appealing than a bare bed with doll and blankets buried somewhere in the depths of a toy chest. Adults should apply the same aesthetic standards to creating a play environment that they might apply to creating spaces in which adults play, relax, eat, or work.
- The provision and maintenance of a good play environment depend on the constant care and attention of adults. Once a play

*Kritchevsky, Sybil and Elizabeth Prescott. **Planning Environments for Young Children: Physical Space.**

space is arranged, it takes adult efforts to maintain order, attractiveness, and safety. Young children can help—and will occasionally do a fine job of cleanup all by themselves—but usually an adult has to provide a consistent example of someone who values the environment and who will straighten, repair, or enrich the play materials. Uncared for and unsupervised, play environments can become chaotic and unappealing. Children learn best by emulating the adults who are important to them. If adults work cheerfully and matter-of-factly to put toys away and restore the environment to its original attractive condition, children will too—eventually!

This guide describes a mini-environment designed for children between the ages of two and four. It also can be adapted for five- and six-year-olds. Although specific materials may differ, the same principles apply to planning for the play of older children. The environment is relatively easy to organize. Many of the objects in it are household items; others are easy to find or make. The environment is quickly set up and taken a part. Because it is divided into eight activity or interest areas, individual areas can be set up if space or time is limited. Parents or family day care providers may find that rotating or selecting different activities each day may enable them to tailor the play environment to children's ever-changing interests. Children and adults can decide together on the activities of the day. For example, on one day the adult might provide blocks, dramatic play, and painting. On another day, painting might not be available, but musical instruments and song books would be provided. In centers or schools where larger groups of children play, it is customary to include a wider variety of materials each day so that children have opportunities to exercise choice, make decisions, and play together in small groups that share the same interests.

In setting up a play environment for children, it is important to recognize that adults also have needs. Their emotions and comforts must be taken into consideration. On some days, adults may not feel their best and will not want to set up an activity that requires special supervision, such as painting. On these days, they can provide materials that children can use on their own without much assistance. At other times, when both adults and children feel joyful and energetic, a marching band using pots and pans for instruments may be wonderful!

The list of materials included is meant to be suggestive and not prescriptive. Use your imagination and adapt ideas and materials to meet the needs of the children with whom you work.

Remember, too, that play materials and the arrangement of activity or interest areas do not by themselves ensure happy play experiences. Gentle and loving adult supervision is critical if the mini-environment is to be a rewarding and happy place for children's play.

Activity or Interest Areas

1. *Blocks/construction area.* Many early childhood educators and parents agree that this is one of the most important activities to provide for young children and one that should be consistently available. Although other activities may be rotated (for example, paints or play dough might be available only occasionally), blocks and block accessories are staples in the play environment. When children build with blocks they expand their imaginations and increase their problem-solving skills. They experiment with weight, size, length, and other mathematical concepts, and at the same time practice eye-hand coordination. As children begin to construct roads, houses, farms, zoos, and cities, they begin to see how places relate to one another in space. Block play is equally exciting for a child working alone or for a small group of children working together. When blocks and small toys that are used as block accessories are stored neatly on low shelves, children can see at a glance what is available, and block-building can become systematic and productive play.

Materials	*Comments*
Blocks	Should be durable and splinter-free. The number of blocks will depend on the needs of the children. Twenty blocks of two or three basic shapes should be adequate for a two-year-old. A group of four- and five-year-olds will need several hundred that include a variety of shapes and sizes.

Rubber, wood, or plastic figures of animals and people	Duplicate figures may be advisable for a group of very young children who have not yet learned to share.
Transportation toys (cars, trucks, trains)	Small toys (for example, cars that fit on a road consisting of a single lane of blocks) may be preferable to large trucks used only for filling and dumping blocks.
Doll bed/crib	
Kitchen equipment: toy sink, stove, refrigerator, plastic fruit and vegetables	Temporary equipment can be improvised with cardboard boxes. Outline burners on a box for the stove and cut an oven door in one side. Can be painted. Improvise a sink by placing a dishpan in a milk carrier crate.
Clocks ("real" or otherwise)	Hats and wigs can transmit lice so they should be used with caution.
Tablecloths and placemats	
Cleaning utensils: mop, dustpan	
Empty food containers or boxes	
Steering wheel	
Dress-up clothes and other objects to spark imagination and enrich play	

2. *Dramatic play/let's pretend.* Children's love of make-believe and their interest in the lives of the adults and animals they observe each day make the dramatic play area a popular, ever-changing place. The game of "let's pretend" allows children to experiment with different roles, using play to express feelings and questions they may not be able to articulate with words. Sensitive adults can often deepen their understanding of a child's moods, questions, or development by being careful observers in the dramatic play area. Often they will see a child pretending to be someone quite different from the person he or she is in everyday life. A three-year-old boy, for example, may attire himself in high heels and wedding dress before staggering off to "her" office; a small girl may become a shouting, swaggering firefighter as she dons a red plastic rainhat and seizes a short length of garden hose.

Materials	*Comments*
Pots, pans, silverware, mirror, telephone	Unbreakable, if possible.
Curtain, bedspread, or blanket	Drape over a table to create an instant house, cave, or tent.
Dolls	Male and female—black, white, hispanic.
Pieces of fabric of varying sizes, colors, and textures	Preferably washable. For doll clothes, bedding, etc.
Puppets	Also can be used in small-muscle and language areas.

3. *Science area.* Sensory and perceptual skills as well as nature study and cultural learning are expanded as children interact with the materials in all areas of their play. Youngsters want to know about the objects they smell, touch, taste, hear, and see. As children explore, solve problems, question, analyze, investigate, experiment, and examine, they increase their understanding of the world in which they live. Some adults plan a specific science area; others prefer to encourage children to incorporate the science material in the other activity areas.

*Materials**	*Comments*
Magnets, rulers, and other equipment to encourage scientific exploration, measurement, etc.	
Medicine droppers, varying size containers, measuring cups and spoons	Unbreakable.
Sponges, funnels, strainers, bubbles	For water play.

*See bibliography for resources with instructions for making learning games.

Water, sand, and natural materials such as leaves and stones	

4. *Music area.* Singing and making noise provide a form of self-expression. Through music, children become acquainted with sound, rhythm, and pitch. Children enjoy inventing songs to communicate daily experiences and events. Singing also gives children the opportunity to experiment with language. Playing instruments and listening to records are important social activities. It also can be fun and relaxing for children to listen to music when they are alone.

Materials	*Comments*
Sandblocks, drums, bells, xylophone, maracas, tambourine, cymbals, triangle, phonograph, records (most public libraries have excellent records for young children)	Many of the books and pamphlets listed in the bibliography contain instructions for making instruments. Pots and pans, bells, wooden spoons, and other objects found in many homes are wonderful instant instruments.

5. *Books, stories, and language area.* A library corner can provide a cozy, comfortable, quiet environment. Children can enjoy time alone with a good book or a quiet game with an adult or one or two other children. Many two-year-olds love books and their interest will increase during the preschool years if adults provide them with beautiful, appropriate books and share their enjoyment by reading or looking at pictures every day. Parents at home with young children may include children's books in their own library and read to children while sitting on a couch or a bed. Children need to be comfortable when they look at books. Their books should also be easily accessible.

Materials	*Comments*
Books, pillows, carpet remnants, rugs	Make a soft, comfortable, and attractive place to sit or lie.
Flannel board	May need skid pad to prevent sliding.
Quiet games	For example, lotto, matching.
Bookshelves or baskets	When books are stored in baskets, children can take them along as companions.

6. *Art area.* Art activities encourage children to be imaginative by affording opportunities for self-expression. Small-muscle coordination is improved as children manipulate crayons, paint brushes, pencils, and scissors. Children can paint on newsprint spread on the floor, standing at easels, or seated at tables. Each arrangement stimulates different uses of muscles and space. Experimenting with different materials allows children to be creative and develops their perceptual skills. Even cleanup can be a learning experience through which children take responsibility for themselves, their behavior, and their possessions.

Materials	*Comments*
Paint: tempera and finger paint, crayons, chalk, magic markers	Must be nontoxic and lead-free.
Paper	Manila and colored construction paper or scrap paper that has been used on one side. Two- and three-year-olds often enjoy painting on newspapers.

Smocks or old shirts, newspapers for floors	Very young children often become distressed if paint or other materials "mess" their clothes. It is wise to use smocks for all messy activities.
Scissors	Right- and left-handed.
Brushes (1½-2 inch width)	Do not use very small brushes with sharp pointed handles.
Play dough, clay	Plasticene should be avoided until children are old enough to soften it themselves.
Rolling pins, cookie cutters	For play dough.
Cotton swabs	It's fun to paint with them.
Ribbons, straws, scraps of fabric, corks, glue or paste, sand	For stringing and collages—"beautiful junk."
Jars or paper cups	To put glue and paint into.

7. *Small-muscle toy area.* Puzzles, tinker toys, lego, stacking, and take-apart toys help to develop the small muscles in fingers and hands and allow children to practice eye-hand coordination. This kind of play challenges children to think, concentrate, and solve problems presented by the toy or game. Participation in small group games, such as lotto, introduces children to the fun of playing as a member of a group and helps them to develop the ability to abide by the rules of the game. Children who work together to assemble a puzzle or to figure out why something works as it does begin to understand that two heads may indeed be better than one.

Materials	*Comments*
Puzzles	Four- to six-piece puzzles for beginners. Increase complexity and number of pieces as children gain experience.
Preschool lego or take-apart toys, games, puppets	Also can be used with books and stories.
Noodles, big beads, straws	For stringing.
Stacking toys, pegboards, coffee cans, containers, clothespins (be sure there are no sharp points or edges)	Children clip clothespins to the edge of container. Games or toys with small parts or pieces require *constant* supervision, particularly if children are inclined to put objects in their mouths.

8. *Large-muscle area.* Children, who are full of energy, need time, open spaces, and equipment for vigorous physical activity whether they are playing by themselves or as members of a group. The equipment provided can help to focus their energies, improve large-muscle coordination, stimulate social interaction, and develop awareness of spatial relations. Jumping on an old mattress, climbing into and through and over and under boxes, rolling, kicking, and throwing balls, and balancing on a board are favorite activities of young children.

Materials	*Comments*
Boxes	Large box to climb into or on top of.
Old mattress	
Balls	Various sizes depending upon space. Also, different materials depend on room. Sponge or cloth balls are great for indoor use.
Bowling game	
Climbing equipment	
Low saw horses (8 inches from the ground), a sturdy board (well-sanded)	If these are to be used for a seesaw or ramp it will be helpful to attach cleats to one side. Sturdy large objects form supports for a board, thus creating a balance beam.

9. *Miscellaneous.* A good environment for children is a creative but well-conceived and organized environment. Parents and other caregivers should have on hand:

- Washcloths; towels—cloth and paper; soap; cleansers; tissues; first-aid kit; extra clothes—shirts, pants, underwear.
- Information about where parents or guardians can be reached.
- Phone numbers of emergency services (fire, police, ambulance, doctors).
- Health, nutritional, or other special needs of each child should be kept next to the telephone.

In Summary

Healthy children are curious children. Adults will discover that children will use in their play any or all materials that are available. Careful planning, energetic scrounging, an attractive arrangement of selected materials, and loving adult supervision add up to a play environment that will help children learn more about themselves and the world around them.

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A slide set (#250) *Come In and Play: Found and Scrounged Environments for Children* complements this fact sheet and can be ordered from the Audio-Visual Resource Center, 8 Research Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14850. A poster, *Learning Is . . .* also is available. Inquire about prices.

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Resources for Parents and
Others Who Care about Children

Ages and Stages

Ages and Stages of the Middle-Years Child Part I: Six- to Eight-Year-Olds

by Florence J. Cherry

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USDA photo by Gordon Baer

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The ages six to twelve are commonly known as the middle years of childhood. This is the time when children are in full bloom: they are no longer babies but the demands of adult life are still far away. All through this period children continue to develop their special personalities. They are getting to know more about themselves and the world in which they live, and their slow, steady growth can be observed. They grow in independence and are more able to take care of themselves. They also are eager adventurers who learn from their explorations but who often find, to their dismay and to the dismay of the adults around them, that they still have a lot to learn.

Each child is different and there are no set rules for rearing or teaching children. How children grow depends on the characteristics they inherit from their parents and, to a great extent, it depends on the guidance provided by parents and other adults. It also depends on the experiences they have inside and outside of their homes.

Although each child's temperament makes her special, certain guidelines of child growth apply to most youngsters, and parents and other caregivers may find these guidelines helpful when working with the middle-years child.

Physical Development

Growth is of many different kinds and a child's development during the middle years includes increases in height, weight, and strength. The different rates of growth of various body parts account for the awkwardness of the youngster in the late childhood years. Height and weight increase much more slowly and evenly during the middle years than in early childhood. Children usually gain about two or three inches in height each year. Just as height increases at a slow steady pace, so, too, does weight. At the age of six, a child will be about seven times his birth weight. For example, a child who weighed seven pounds at birth will weigh almost fifty pounds at age six. Body proportions also change. The trunk becomes slimmer and more elongated in contrast to the chunky body of the preschooler. The chest becomes broader and flatter, causing the shoulders to droop. Arms and legs become long and thin with little evidence of muscles. It is this thinning-out of the trunk, combined with the elongation of the arms and legs, that gives the middle-years child the "all arms and legs" gawky appearance.

Sexual Differentiation

During the middle years, boys and girls gradually become aware of sexual differences in behavior, attitudes, and manners. These sex differences still can be seen in many play activities. Fortunately, however, both boys and girls now receive more encouragement to try activities traditionally reserved for the opposite sex. This helps to break down sex-role stereotypes. For example, girls learn that they can be good at tasks requiring physical skill, and boys learn that they can be caring young persons without losing their "masculinity." Opportunities for different kinds of play also mean that children develop a variety of skills to carry with them into adulthood.

Psychological Development

Middle-years children can find themselves in conflict with the need to grow up and the desire to remain a child forever, a conflict known as the Peter Pan fantasy. They want to grow up so that they can enjoy the prerogatives of adult life: staying up late, driving the car, wearing adult-styled clothes, and being privy to adult secrets. They want to be able to understand and laugh at adult jokes and be accepted into adult confidences and discussions.

On the other hand, they also want to hold on to all the privileges of childhood. Boys who quarrel, fight, and roughhouse and girls who dress up in their mothers' clothing and makeup

are regarded as amusing by adults who would not tolerate such behavior in teenagers.

Social Development

There is a culture of childhood that is passed on solely by oral tradition. Many childrens' games, like hopscotch, marbles, kick-the-can, and blindman's buff, are passed down verbally from one generation to the next. Jokes, riddles, and sayings also are transmitted orally.

Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie
Kissed the girls and made them cry.

or

Sticks and stones may break my bones,
But names will never hurt me.

or

Ladybug, ladybug fly away home.
Your house is on fire your children are gone
Except for the little one under the stone
Ladybug, ladybug fly away home.

or

Rain, rain go away
Come again another day.

This culture of childhood that finds itself rooted in the past gives a clue to the child's relationship to her family. In contrast to the upheaval an adolescent experiences, the young child may appear to be a staid traditionalist who accepts the authority of the family just as she accepts the games and superstitions of previous generations of children. The middle-years child is more likely to defend than attack her family and what it stands for. The family is the main base of security and identity and is still more important than the child's peer group.

Ages and Stages

Information presented here about the ages and stages of children is only a *guide* for adults working with children. Physically, emotionally, and intellectually, each child grows and develops at his own rate. Some youngsters may be early bloomers. That is, they may have reached a stage of emotional or physical development beyond their chronological years. It is not unusual for a six-year-old to be as tall as a ten-year-old. But when interacting with this child, adults must remember that he *is* six and not ten and they should not expect him to behave as though he were a ten-year-old. Another example is an eight-year-old with an extensive vocabulary who can converse with adults as though she were twelve. In a relationship with this child, it is important for adults to remember that although she may be conversationally mature, she may be mentally, physically,and emotionally still an eight-year-old.

Understanding the characteristics of an age can be helpful to adults who work with or care for children. But, if adults are to foster optimal growth and development in children, they also must remain sensitive and responsive to children as individuals.

Six-Year-Olds

General

The sixth year is the age of transition.

- At this age, children are active, outgoing, and self-centered. Their own activities take precedence over everything else.
- They are in constant motion: jiggling, shoving, and pushing. They like to roughhouse and their play may go too far because they don't know when to stop.
- They can play organized games with rules, but only at beginning levels because strategy and foresight are not highly developed at the age of six.
- Six-year-olds may be clumsy and tend to dawdle. For example, they may be slow at dressing to go to school or other places. On the other hand, they want their needs met at once and get upset when adults do not drop everything to do their bidding.

Self-Concept and Independence

- They want to be the center of everything—to be first and to win. They are the center of their very own universe and their way of doing things seems the best and only way. They do not lose gracefully or accept criticism.
- They are assertive, bossy, and extremely sensitive to real or imagined slights. They dominate every situation and are always ready with advice.
- Growing up may be a strain at times for six-year-olds and there may be a period of regression during which they engage in baby talk and display babyish behavior.
- Six-year-olds are extremely possessive of their belongings.
- When the outside world impinges adversely upon them, they are stubborn, obstinate, and unreasonable.
- They tend to project their own feelings onto others and then criticize other people because of this. "She thinks she's everything" or "He's so fresh."

- They are ashamed of their mistakes and fears and of being seen crying and are careful not to expose themselves to criticism.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

- Six-year-olds often pair up and have best friends with whom they spend a good deal of time. Such pairs often take pleasure in "keeping out" a third child who wants to join them.
- Friendships are erratic and may change many times. Lots of tattling and putting-down of other children goes on, for example, "He's dumb."
- Boys and girls occasionally play together at this age, but the movement toward same-sexed friends has already begun.
- Six-year-olds can be highly sensitive to their parents' moods. For instance, they are quick to notice changes in facial expressions.

Although the six-year-old is most loving of his mother, he is also building his sense of self by trying to break away from her. Many temper tantrums are directed at her and the six-year-old may often refuse to obey his mother's directions. On the other hand, the six-year-old can be sympathetic toward his mother when she is not feeling well.

Parents can find the six-year-old trying. Adults working with six-year-olds need to keep a sense of perspective and their sense of humor. If parents and other caregivers remember the transitional nature of this age, six will become a more manageable and less trying age.

Games and Activities

- Their activities center on the physical. Riding a bicycle is an activity they enjoy. Roller skating and swimming also are favorites.
- They are poor at games requiring strategy and foresight like chess, checkers, and tic-tac-toe, but like running games such as tag and hide-and-seek.
- Six-year-olds like making things as well as cooking activities. They also like to paint, color, and draw.

Seven-Year-Olds

General

Seven is the age of quieting down.

- Toward the beginning of the seventh year the child begins to assimilate the wealth of new experiences and information she learned in first grade.
- They begin to sift and sort information into categories and link the bits of information that they have acquired. Seven-year-olds begin to reason and may at times appear serious and reflective.
- Seven-year-olds can be moody and brooding and pensive and sad because their assimilation of knowledge is not always smooth. Action has shifted and may now take place within their minds rather than within a physical space.
- Although they are self-absorbed they are not isolationists. They are becoming more aware not only of themselves, but of others as well.

Self-Concept and Independence

- The increased introspection of seven-year-olds also means that they have an increased sense of self and are acquiring sensitivity to the reactions of others. This sensitivity is to what others do and say, but not to what other people think. To the seven-year-old, thinking and doing are the same thing.
- They are sensitive about their bodies, which they do not like to have exposed or touched, and they may refuse to use the bathroom at school if it has no door on it.
- Because the physical self and the psychic self are so closely related at this stage, seven-year-olds are reluctant to expose themselves to failure and criticism. They often leave the scene rather than put themselves in a position where they might be subject to criticism or disapproval.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

- They want to be helpful and to become real members of the family group.
- They can take on tasks and responsibilities. When performing chores, they are careful and persistent, and they will demand guidance from adults as to "What do we do now?" or "How do we do this?"
- They can be polite and considerate toward adults. Seven-year-olds are less resistant and less stubborn than six-year-olds.
- They play easily with other children and seem to be in control. Although they are active and boisterous, they know when to stop before someone gets hurt.

Games and Activities

- Seven-year-olds have more capacity to play alone than they had at six, and they enjoy solitary activities such as reading and drawing.
- Group play is still not well organized and is carried out to individual ends.
- They like building things but need to know where things go and where they end. They can understand a simple model and a blueprint.
- Seven-year-olds continue to skate, swim, and are better at bike riding.
- They are avid collectors of anything and everything from stones to bottle tops.
- Seven-year-olds are fond of table games and jigsaw puzzles and can tackle a complicated game like Monopoly.

Eight-Year-Olds

General

Eight-year-olds are expansive, but on a higher level than when they were six.

- They are outgoing, curious, and extremely social and self-confident.
- They tend to be critical of themselves and judgmental of others.
- They now concern themselves with the why of events, and they are active and expansive as they seek out new experiences.
- Eight-year-olds talk constantly and love to gossip.

Self-Concept and Independence

- Eight-year-olds have a greater awareness of self; they are less sensitive, less introspective, and less apt to withdraw. They are becoming individuals who are aware of themselves in the social world.
- They are able to judge and appraise themselves and are conscious of the ways in which they differ from other people.
- Eight-year-olds are concerned about how other people feel about them, and they can be demanding in their efforts to get information about themselves.
- They can work independently, but need direction.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

- Eight-year-olds are mature in their social relationships with others. Relationships with friends are positive. Friendships are closer and very important.
- There is a noticeable separation between boys and girls and both play at games that tend to exclude the opposite sex.
- They are usually friendly and cooperative, preferring mature jobs that resemble adult-like activities.
- They are more polite with strangers than they are at home and are able to hold their own in conversations with adults.

Games and Activities

- Eight-year-olds dislike playing alone. They prefer to be with an adult or another child. Action becomes the focus of all their play.
- Both boys and girls like cooking and baking and show an interest in foreign places and children from different times.
- The collections they began at seven now become more organized and classified.

• They tend to make up their own rules for games and they may even invent new games.

• Eight-year-olds like dramatic play, especially where they take the role of characters they have read about, seen, or heard about.

• Table games such as cards, parchesi, checkers, and dominoes are very popular.

·When working with eight-year-olds, adults must remember that they are very social and like to be with peers. They gossip and talk constantly, passing notes from one to the other. This often gets out-of-hand when they are in group situations. In addition to their tendency to judge others, eight-year-olds are increasingly self-critical. For example, many children who liked artwork at six or seven may give it up at eight because they see the difference between the quality of their drawings and those of a friend.

In Summary

Children are individuals with their own special temperaments and idiosyncracies. The ages and stages children go through can vary tremendously from one child to the next and, by respecting the variousness of children, parents and other caregivers can help them develop strong and healthy self-concepts.

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Resources for Parents and
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Ages and Stages

Ages and Stages of the Middle-Years Child Part II: Nine- to Eleven-Year-Olds

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Cornell Cooperative Extension

Photo by Harvey Ferdschneider

The ages six to twelve are commonly known as the middle years of childhood. This is the time when children are in full bloom; they are no longer babies but the demands of adult life are still far away. All through this period children continue to develop their special personalities. They are getting to know more about themselves and the world in which they live and their slow steady growth can be observed. They grow in independence and become more able to take care of themselves. They also are eager adventurers who learn from their explorations but who often find, to their dismay and to the dismay of the adults around them, that they still have a lot to learn.

Each child is different and there are no set rules for rearing or teaching children. How children grow depends on the characteristics they inherit from their parents and, to a good extent, it depends on the guidance provided by parents and other adults. It also depends on the experiences youngsters have inside and outside of their homes.

Although each child's temperament makes her special, certain guidelines of child growth apply to most youngsters, and parents and other caregivers may find these guidelines helpful when working with the middle-years child.

- **In physical development,** height and weight increase slowly and evenly. Children gain about two or three inches in height each year. Body proportions also change. In contrast to the chunky body of the preschooler, during the middle years the trunk becomes slimmer, the chest becomes broader, and the arms and legs thin out.
- **In psychological development,** middle-years children can find themselves in conflict between the need to grow up and the desire to remain a child forever. They want to grow up so that they can enjoy the prerogatives of adult life, but they also want to hold on to all the privileges of childhood.

During the middle years, boys and girls gradually become aware of sexual differences. Fortunately, children now are encouraged to try activities traditionally reserved for the opposite sex—a trend that is helping to break down sex-role stereotypes.

- **In social development,** the middle-years child may appear to be a staid traditionalist who accepts the authority of the family. The family is the main base of security and identity, although around the age of eleven the child begins to place more and more value on the peer group.

Ages and Stages

The information presented here about the ages and stages of children is only a *guide*. Physically, emotionally, and intellectually, each child grows and develops at his own rate. Some youngsters may be early bloomers. That is, they may have reached a stage of emotional or physical development beyond their chronological years. Understanding the characteristics of an age can be helpful to adults who work with or care for children. But, if adults are to foster optimal growth and development in children, they also must remain sensitive and responsive to children as individuals.

Nine-Year-Olds

General

Nine is a developmental middle zone.

- The nine-year-old shows a new maturity, self-confidence, and independence from adults.
- There is an increase in maturity and refinement of behavior. Judgmental tendencies are more discerning and objective. Nine-year-olds can evaluate themselves, find that they are lacking, but not feel guilty about it.

Self-Concept and Independence

- Nine-year-olds tend to be inner-directed and self-motivated.

• They have occasions of intense emotion and impatience, but their outbursts are less frequent and they show greater self-control. The inner-directed quality of their behavior allows nine-year-olds to become intently involved in activities.

• If forced to interrupt an activity, nine-year-olds will usually come back to it on their own.

• They can think and reason for themselves.

• They can be trusted.

• They may withdraw from surroundings to get a sense of self. They do not, however, retreat as much as they did when they were seven.

• Nine-year-olds do not feel impelled to boast and attack to protect themselves.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

• In their relationships with both adults and peers, they show consideration and fairness beyond that shown at a younger age.

• They can accept their own failures and mistakes, and they are willing to take responsibility for their own actions.

• Nine-year-olds have an increased awareness of sex and sex-differentiated behaviors.

• Girls can become concerned about their clothing and appearance. They take more interest in the "right" fashion.

• Friendships tend to be more solid, but occasionally nine-year-olds can have an intense dislike of the opposite sex, preferring to be with children of their own age and sex. Boys and girls both may begin to form clubs around various activities.

• Although their independence can be trying at times, they are often easier to work with than younger children who make great demands on adults.

• They are anxious to please and love to be chosen.

• Most of the mother-child conflict of the eight-year-old has disappeared, and the nine-year-old makes fewer demands on parents.

• Nine-year-olds usually have no problems with young children or older brothers and sisters. In fact, they can be very loyal to siblings.

Games and Activities

• Nine-year-olds spend much time in solitary activities of their own choosing.

• Bicycling, roller and ice skating, and swimming are physical activities they enjoy.

• They continue to enjoy the advanced table games they learned at eight.

• Materials and information attract the nine-year-old. Organized games or activities such as baseball, football, and basketball are popular. Many children at this age also have mastered basic reading and arithmetic and can use these skills to gain information, to solve problems, and to participate in games and recreation.

Ten-Year-Olds

General

Ten is the high point of childhood. Ten-year-olds have worked through the difficulties of home, school, and community. They now can take pride in their ability to fit in at home, at school, and at play with their peers. On occasion, there can be outbursts of anger, depression, or sadness, but these moods are short-lived and soon forgotten.

- Girls are slightly more advanced sexually than boys and already there is some evidence of the rapid sprint to maturity that will make them taller and heavier than boys their own age in a couple of years. Their bodies are rounding out and the softening of contours may begin. Some girls may even experience the first stages of breast development. Girls become concerned about their bodies and menstruation and about sexual activity in general.
- For boys physical changes are less marked, thus concern for the body and physical maturity is much less noticeable.

Self-Concept and Independence

- Ten-year-olds accept themselves as they are without worrying too much about their strengths and weaknesses. They are much less interested in evaluating themselves. They like their bodies and like what they can do both athletically and academically. Their self-acceptance is heightened by the acceptance accorded them by peers, families, and school.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

- Ten-year-olds like and enjoy their friends. Boys may move into loosely organized groups. Within these groups, boys may have particular friends, but there is a lot of switching around. Girls usually move in smaller groups and are likely to form more intense friendships and have more serious "falling outs" with their friends being "mad" and "not playing" or "not speaking" to one another as a result. There are times when ten-year-olds may seem to value their peer group more than their families.
- Teachers and other adults who interact with this age group are popular if they are fair and not partial to particular children in the group. Adults working with ten-year-olds need to be firm but not strict. At this age children like adult leaders to schedule activities and like to keep to the schedule.

Games and Activities

- They like outings and trips.

Photo by Harvey Ferdschneider

- They like organized games and belonging to clubs and groups.
- When working on a project they may need to get up and move about.

Eleven-Year-Olds

General

At this age, there is an accelerated growth pace.

- The eleven-year-old's activity level increases; energy and appetite also increase.
- There is a tendency at this age to forget manners, to be loud, rude, and boorish, and to take unnecessary chances as a means of defying adult authority. Riding bicycles in heavy traffic is an example of this kind of behavior.
- Eleven-year-olds quarrel a good deal with adults and lack emotional control although they can be cooperative and friendly with strangers. They need firmness and understanding from adults.

Self-Concept and Independence

- They can be belligerent because of their high energy level, which pushes them toward activities, but which sometimes leads to carelessness.
- The eleven-year-old is looking for new self-definition.
- They will often confront others with criticism in an effort to get attention. They can, however, admit faults.

- They will sometimes differ with parents on careers and have dreams of being famous while their parents try to temper such fantasies.
- An eleven-year-old, on occasion, will challenge parents and other adults on child-rearing practices.

Relating to Other Children and Adults

- Boys and girls have best friends and a group of other friends who are selected because of common interests and temperaments.
- Both boys and girls admit to being interested in the opposite sex and show their interest by teasing, joking, and showing off.
- Eleven-year-olds like to quarrel with others, but don't like others to argue with them.
- They can be cooperative, friendly, and pleasant with adults, but they need to be treated with understanding and firmness.
- Eleven-year-olds can feel left out from their peer group.

Games and Activities

- They don't like to work with materials that are complex, but they do like things that show off their rote skills.
- Eleven-year-olds have trouble understanding relationships and the complex combinations of events.

In Summary

Children are individuals with their own special temperaments and idiosyncracies. The ages and stages children go through can vary tremendously from one child to the next and, by respecting the variousness of children, parents and other caregivers can help them develop strong and healthy self-concepts.

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Getting to Know Your Child's School

by Christiann Dean

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Do you remember what elementary school was like when you were young? Were you among the children who streamed from a huge yellow bus into a consolidated school, or did you walk or pedal your bike to a school in the neighborhood? Did you arrive at school alone, or with brothers, sisters, and neighbors?

Can you recall the sounds and smells of your childhood school? Did the corridors echo with noisy feet, or did your heartbeat echo in the stillness? Did a faint odor of boiled hot dogs mingle with the smell of ditto sheets?

Picture the arrangement of desks, bulletin boards, chalkboards, windows, and bookcases in your classroom. Was there an alphabetical parade marching across the top of the chalkboard? Did you retreat into a dim cloakroom to unbuckle your boots?

Can you recall your teacher as she taught an arithmetic lesson, graded workbooks, or asked you to line up for gym? How did she react to your thrilling new ability to read?

Were your parents involved in your school? How did they find out about your daily school life and progress? What was report card time like in your family?

As you look back to the school of your own childhood, what other images surface in your mind?

Your perceptions of your child's school are colored by your own childhood school experiences, by your family's values, and by the information you gather about the school.

Many aspects of school have changed since we were elementary school students, so it is important to get to know your child's school. Your perceptions and needs may change as your child grows, so getting acquainted with school is a process that continues throughout the grades.

School and Your Family's Values

Some families may be satisfied if their children emerge from the neighborhood elementary school with a knowledge of reading and math, while their neighbors expect the same school to expose their children to the joys of music and art. While one parent may consider accurate, steady workbook progress an indication of school success, another will look for signs of creativity. America's public school system has been built upon the cooperation and compromise of people of differing viewpoints. Pinpointing the school-related values that are important to your family can help you determine what is most important to *you* as you get acquainted with your child's school.

A value line is a chart that can help you compare what you want for your children with what you think their school wants.

Where do you and your child's school each stand on these issues?

students are quiet and orderly in the classroom

not important ——— very important

students finish all work accurately and on time

not important ——— very important

students have perfect attendance

not important ——— very important

only healthful foods are available in school cafeteria

not important ——— very important

It may be hard to know where your school stands on each issue because the school consists of many people. Each person involved with your school has her own opinions.

Did you mark the same point for yourself and your school on any of the value lines? On which issue did you think that you and the school had very different viewpoints? Some parents want schools and teachers who share the family's values, while others feel that children benefit from knowing many adults with a variety of beliefs.

Being clear about your own values will help you know what questions to ask as you begin to get to know your child's school. Although it would be unrealistic to expect the school to agree with you on every issue, parents should encourage their children's schools to respect family values.

Who is the best teacher? Another way of looking at what is important to you about your child's education is to examine the qualities and skills you would like your child's teacher to have.

If the following teachers were all considered adequate by their school administrations, which one would you rather have teach your child?

Ms. B., who has been teaching for three years, has an interesting classroom. Last week one child's grandmother brought in homing pigeons. In the fall the class devoted two weeks to preparing for a play that it had written. Student-written stories replace standard reading texts. The children select seatmates to share their four-desk clusters. Because Ms. B. believes in the importance of children's time with their parents, she doesn't assign homework.

Mr. C., who is in his second year of teaching, has high standards for his students. Each student gives a weekly book report. Mr. C. corrects and returns daily the homework that must be turned in each morning by 9:00 A.M. Boys and girls sit on opposite sides of the classroom, in rows according to the alphabetical order of their last names.

Mrs. V. has been teaching for fifteen years. Each year she invites parents and grandparents to tell the class about their jobs, travels, or childhood experiences. She completes the standard texts chapter by chapter, giving regular quizzes and tests. The students' desks are arranged in rows, with shorter children sitting closest to the front of the classroom. Mrs. V. assigns homework when the children don't complete the planned work at school.

What values would you share with the teacher you chose? Families want different kinds of teachers for their children, depending on what is most important to them. Even within families, different children may need different kinds of teachers depending on their educational needs and learning stages. Some schools try to be responsive when parents request that their children be assigned to particular teachers. Knowing what you value in a teacher is a vital first step toward exploring this possibility with your school.

Getting Better Acquainted with Your Child's School

Although many people will help your child learn, as a parent you have a responsibility to see that your child gets a good education. Parents have used these methods to get acquainted with their children's schools:

- making an appointment to visit
- dropping in to look around and talk with people
- calling or writing to teachers or principals
- talking with other parents and children about their experiences
- reading school board minutes in the newspaper
- reading the school newsletter
- attending an open house.

Combining several of these methods of information-gathering will yield a more balanced picture of school life. If you have already formed an opinion of a school or teacher, ask yourself this question:

How many sources of information have I used in reaching this conclusion?

Scheduling a visit to your school is a relatively easy way to gather valuable information. Many parents have found it useful to pay a springtime visit to all classrooms of the grade their child will enter in the fall. Although this approach offers the advantages of firsthand glimpses of several classrooms, it is difficult for many parents to visit a school because of child care or work schedules. This option also is not available to parents in some school systems. The harmony of the classrooms, too, must be considered, as a stream of visitors during one season can be unsettling to the daily routine. If your child already has been assigned to a classroom, making an appointment for a short visit together will encourage a comfortable transition while letting the school know you are interested. Keep in mind that one visit will give you only a superficial look at that teacher and class. If you have an opportunity to talk with the teacher or principal, here are some points that you may want to discuss:

- How are each child's individual needs met?
- What methods of parent-teacher communication have worked well? How can parents be involved in the school's life?
- What arrangements are made for lunch, after-school care, busing?
- What educational materials are being used?
- What approach is used to teach reading?

A classroom visit scheduled once the school year is under way can promote a cooperative relationship with your child's teacher *if* you make your intentions clear. Unless you let the teacher know that your reason for visiting is to understand more of your child's school life, past experiences or insecurity may cause him to act defensively. Your child's teacher would probably appreciate knowing what your schedule is like and how you can be reached.

Dropping in at school can provide a candid picture of daily school life. Parents whose children have already begun school can take such opportunities as delivering a forgotten lunch box or picking up a child for a midday doctor's appointment to spend a few minutes in the classroom and school. Parents with flexible work schedules can, of course, rely more on this method while parents who are home with younger children and those who are employed full time will find notes, phone calls, and neighborhood talks more likely means of learning about school life. Stopping in is welcomed by some teachers, while others find that unannounced visits disrupt the harmony of the classroom. Some teachers favor an open-door atmosphere but their school's policies do not. Parents can work together with these teachers to change those policies that discourage parents from feeling welcome at school. A teacher's feelings about drop-in visits are influenced by teaching style, outlook on parent involvement, sense of security, and by the attitude that a parent presents. Ask yourself this question:

If someone dropped in unannounced at my home or workplace, would she get an accurate, complete picture?

Keeping this question in mind encourages you to balance impressions gained through a brief drop-in classroom visit with information available through other sources.

Calling or writing to teachers or principals can be the beginning of a cooperative relationship between busy parents and schools. When I was teaching in elementary school, my heart warmed immediately to the parent who wrote in a brief note in September, "We're delighted that Gail seems so happy in kindergarten. She's already expressing herself more easily. Please feel free to call or send a note about anything you think we should know about." Although this note probably took only a few minutes to write and tuck into a lunch box, it opened a channel of communication between home and school through which flowed notes and phone conversations about academic progress, social growth, adjustment to family changes, and health considerations. Although time was limited by two full-time jobs and the birth of a baby, these parents established their interest in a cooperative home-school relationship from the beginning. Many teachers will respond to such an invitation with periodic informal updates on a child's progress. A brief phone call at the beginning of a school year can serve the same purpose.

Although widely criticized, the grapevine may be the most common source of information about school. Talking with neighbors, friends, and children about school experiences can be useful *if* the source of information is

carefully considered and *if* you balance what you hear with information gleaned from school visits, newsletters, and communication with the teacher. The grapevine can reveal helpful information *if* you keep in mind that people often express their outrage and disappointment with greater vigor than they use to communicate their satisfaction. When discussing school situations with your neighbors and children, specific questions can help them provide useful information.

- What did you like best about that teacher? What did you like least?
- What did you(r child) learn with that teacher?
- What was your goal?
- How did the school people handle your criticism?
- What did you do about the situation?

Most schools use public newsletters, parent-teacher association meetings, and annual open house evenings to keep parents informed about school. Although newsletters are useful for publishing calendars, describing official school policies, and introducing new teachers, these publications are often limited to one-way communication from school to home. Attending an open house evening gives a parent the opportunity to visit a largely child-free (and thus atypical) school and perhaps talk briefly with the teacher. Schools that are experiencing limited attendance at open houses may be willing to experiment with other ways of encouraging parents to learn about their children's school progress, such as helping children to plan and host these events.

Small city, village, and rural newspapers frequently carry accounts of school board meetings. Although most parents don't become regularly involved with their school board, attending one meeting and reading the published minutes will acquaint parents with decisions concerning hiring of school personnel, building renovation or closing, and school policies.

Combining these ways of getting acquainted with school can give a balanced picture of your child's daily school experience. Each family will choose the combination that suits its own schedule and inclinations.

Everyone Wins When Parents and Teachers Cooperate

Parents, teachers, and children share a common dream of schools in which children's knowledge and abilities flourish under the guidance of caring, skillful teachers. Either parents or teachers can initiate positive home-school relationships that strengthen the learning process. *Letting the teacher know that you appreciate his work and welcome communication about your child's school life* is a vital first step toward promoting this positive relationship. Establishing a cooperative relationship at the beginning of each school year can prevent much misunderstanding and blame if problems arise with your child's progress or behavior.

School expands a child's world and helps the child develop important skills. Parents have a right and a responsibility to become acquainted with their local school and to encourage the school to provide an education that helps each child develop as fully as possible.

Developing cooperative relationships with all the others who care about your child usually means, for you and your child, living and learning within a network of capable and caring people.

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Identifies three traits of a good elementary school and describes an information-gathering visit to a school.

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Describes the importance of kindergarten and outlines steps parents can take to prepare children for this important beginning.

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Cornell Cooperative Extension
Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

The World of the Five-Year-Old

The World of the Five-Year-Old

by Patricia Fender-Robinson

Department of Human Development and Family Studies Cornell University

The five-year-old is full of vigor, sure of self, and has attained personal mastery in a number of observable ways. Five-year-olds will let you know that they are competent young people, able to attend to many of their physical needs, verbalize their thoughts and feelings, and socialize with other children and adults. Following an individual pattern of developmental spurts, five-year-olds acquire the knowledge and skills to function with considerable independence in a familiar environment. "I can do it!" are words often heard and, in fact, five-year-olds can do many things. Helping at home and in school, taking care of personal belongings, carrying on conversations, and, in general, being comfortable with themselves.

Even though the basic personality pattern of the five-year-old is established, a child will continue to develop and mature. The child's personality continues to make itself visible. Talents, temperament, and ways of handling the demands of everyday life are evident, and it is possible for people who know the child to get a glimpse of the emerging man or woman.

The family has been the focus of this young life. In many families, the mother has been the central figure but during the fifth year other adults become important. The father becomes more prominent. Who he is and what he does intrigues and interests the child. The kindergarten teacher is also important. What family has not heard, "But my teacher said. . . . " This is not a criticism of the parents but is the child's way of working out relationships—relationships of people and things to himself and to one another.

Physically, five-year-olds are more in control of movement and enjoy active and energetic play: jungle gym, playing ball (throwing, bouncing, kicking), roller skating, jumping rope, and riding a bicycle. Children's interest in active sports can be encouraged and supported by their parents, although it is not wise to encourage real competition at this age.

If the physical stamina and growth of the child are increasingly evident, so is the child's intellectual growth. What can we observe about the five-year-old's thinking? Does she talk, sit quietly, or move about while she is thinking? Does the child stare into space or look closely at an object? How does she arrange and stack blocks, put color on a piece of paper, or work with clay? Does she pull a wagon, climb, splash water, or jump rope? Does she move to music and sing with vigor? Does she hit, tug, or ignore the child next to her? Understanding that the child *is* thinking helps parents, teachers, and other adults to guide five-year-olds by providing stimulating materials and new experiences. Adults can encourage a child's capacity to make distinctions by asking open-ended questions and supplying observations. Also, observe the child's play and artwork and listen carefully to questions that the child asks.

Language and Perceptions

Language is another way in which we can understand what a child may be thinking. Five-year-olds are "expert" observers and like to describe objects. Linking language to observing, listening, feeling, tasting, and smelling will help children expand their vocabularies and increase sensory development. Five-year-olds are playful with words and ask more questions than adults sometimes have the patience to answer. What is it for? What is it made of? How does it work? Why do I have to do this? Why? Why? Why?

The child begins to move from understanding *me, now, here* to *you, there, then.* There is increased understanding of the meaning of time. "I go to bed at 8 o'clock." "Saturday is cartoon day."

Having mentioned that *why* is a word frequently heard, some questions such as "Where's my daddy?" "What's he doing?" "Why doesn't he come home?" "When is he coming home?" illustrate the sequential thinking of a five-year-old.

Humor emerges in the form of telling jokes and planning unexpected surprises for the family and teacher. When repeating or saying rhyming words, the child often moves from sense to nonsense. The Dr. Seuss books are favorites because of the combined qualities of humor, rhyming, nonsense, and otherworld illustrations.

Jean Piaget, noted Swiss psychologist, spent his lifetime listening to and pondering children's answers. In asking children the question, "Where do dreams come from?" frequent responses included: "They're little pictures,"

"They're little lamps," or "The moon sends them."

Dr. Alice Honig speaks in an article of five-year-old Daren who cried as his father took a large pair of pruning shears and clipped the hedges hanging over the driveway. A parent may be amused at such "babyishness," but to Daren the bushes were alive and should not have been cut or hurt.

The child of five is still egocentric and everything that is perceived or felt seems to be common to the whole world. Everything is external and real. The enthrallment with superheroes on television and the active, imaginative play that follows such viewing serve as a guide and a caution to parents. A parent will want to know what the child is watching and take some time to watch television with the child. A parent may ask himself: Does what my child watches reflect my values for what is desirable in human behavior? Consideration should also be given to the potential impressions of television advertising and to helping children evaluate the advertising they see.

Emotions are strong at this age. Fears and anxieties are usually temporary and concrete and are manifested in thunder, sirens, darkness, solitude, nightmares, and the very strong fear that mother will leave and not return. At this age, the child is likely to express fright during a thunder and lightning storm. Wind and screaming sirens may be scary and fear of the dark may increase. Young children should not be teased or scolded because of their fears. Instead, they should be comforted and assured that they are safe. During this stage, children may be afraid to go to sleep unless there is some light in the room. They will get over this more quickly if you respect their feelings and provide a nightlight that can be turned on and off.

Discipline

The topic of discipline is one often mentioned by parents. For the five-year-old, discipline is not likely to be the problem it may have been when the child was four years old.

Five-year-olds are usually friendly and on familiar terms with the environment of the home. Children become increasingly responsible for their behavior. But, although capable of doing things for themselves, five-year-olds can be very demanding of adults when needing help.

In thinking about how you will respond to situations that involve behaviors that you believe are inappropriate for your child, ask yourself what it is that you value. Parents communicate their values by the way they themselves behave and by the way they encourage or discourage certain behaviors in their children. For example, being attentive for extended periods of time is not easy for five-year-olds and varies depending on the child's interest in the activity or event. Visiting the zoo or going grocery shopping are activities that allow children to use their physical, emotional, and intellectual capabilities. On the other hand, going to church, a stage performance, or a fancy restaurant makes demands on the five-year-old for quietness and "good" behavior that could be a source of conflict between parent and child. Discussing different behaviors for different environments can be reassuring to the young child.

School

The world of the five-year-old has been confined to home, neighborhood, and occasional excursions taken with the family. In entering the world of school, new knowledge and experiences are presented to the child. The five-year-old meets many children of different ages and sizes and the adults who staff the school. As if this were not confusing enough, a child is asked to share the teacher with a number of children of the same age, in the same environment, and on a day-to-day basis. If the child has had some preschool experience, this will not be as difficult as it will be for the five-year-old who comes to the school directly from the home. Support and discussion in the family and sensitive school staff can ease the transition from home to school.

For many children the kindergarten year marks their first unsupervised mobility as they begin to walk to school or wait for the bus or carpool. Without using scare tactics, parents should caution young children against approaching strange animals and strange people.

School is a very important experience for the emerging personality of the five-year-old. Children have been looking forward to the kindergarten experience with great anticipation. They will be going to the "big school" with the "big kids" and perhaps even riding the school bus. Although the five-year-old shows an increase in self-confidence, the first few weeks of school may renew past fears. Will mom remember to pick me up? Does the bus driver know where I live? Which bus do I go on? Family discussions of what is going to happen, visiting the school and kindergarten room, and meeting the teacher will help children and parents adjust to and enjoy this experience. Parents are likely to feel more comfortable and able to support the child if they, too, have been exposed to the school environment. Reading stories that speak of making new friends and trying out new experiences will help the whole family make the transition from home to school. Children of this age enjoy being read to and it is likely that this will be one of the activities that the kindergarten teacher will also value.

Play and the Imagination

Play is important in the world of the five-year-old. If one asks children returning from a day in school what they have done, one is sure to hear "play." Clare Cherry, in *Creative Play for the Developing Child,* calls play "early lifehood education at its best." Jean Piaget remarked that those things that children learn for themselves are the things that children best remember. Play is, among other things, an act of discovery.

Play is also an opportunity for children to arrange and rearrange the world as they see and understand it. Through blockbuilding, dramatic play, housekeeping, and creative expression, children make sense of the world around them.

In dramatic play, children take on the roles of familiar adults. They share their understanding and allow us to participate in their thinking. Roles such as mother, father, baby,

sister, and brother are commonly played. It may seem strange to the adult that the child who wants to be considered a "grown-up" still insists on playing the baby. This is the child working out relationships. In dressing-up and acting out roles, the child demonstrates knowledge of a specific role through language and action and may sound very much like a certain adult in his life. As more people are introduced into the child's life—doctor, nurse, dentist, storekeeper, and other community helpers—the child may begin to experiment with these new and more complex roles. Accessories such as hats and other articles of clothing allow the child to continue with and expand the play.

Blockbuilding provides an opportunity for children to exercise their small muscles through manipulation of blocks: stacking, building, and matching. And as they handle large blocks during play and move about the environment, they are developing large muscles. Blocks also encourage the cooperative play of a few children. As children play with blocks they learn about number concepts, relationships, and the properties of our physical world. If a child is building a fence and runs out of the long rectangular blocks, she can discover that two of the smaller blocks are equal to one of the larger rectangles. Blocks stimulate dramatic play, which allows children to express themselves and use their imaginations freely. The same block can be used as a car, a door, a clock, or anything that the child chooses. Blocks encourage an appreciation of symmetry and balance. The use of blocks encourages a creative use of materials because each child builds in a style that is uniquely her own.

Dramatizing, narrating, reciting, chanting, and rhyming are part of the world of the five-year-old. The child is aware of letters and numbers and wishes to know how to spell and write his name and the names of brothers, sisters, and friends. He may be able to read street signs, the labels on cans and boxes in the home or at the store, and even can "read" a beloved book to a younger brother or sister or to himself. Some children like to see their words in print. They may tell a story, describe an experience, or draw their own picture. The adult then prints, in the child's own language,

what the child wishes to say. Some children enjoy copying their spoken words that adults have written for them and then "reading" the words back to adults.

If play reveals the nature of the child, so does the creative expression that emerges from the use of paints, crayons, markers, watercolors, and other materials. The imagination is stirred and what develops from the child's experimentation with varied materials is likely to be striking in design and color. Children have favorite things that they like to create: houses, cars, designs, or people. They seem to derive pleasure from making their favorite things over and over again using different materials.

Children of this age are likely to believe that inanimate objects are "alive" in the same way that humans are alive. It is not uncommon to see humanlike qualities attached to the objects that children draw. The sun and flowers may have faces and animals may wear clothes. "To draw, you must close your eyes and sing" (Pablo Picasso). This, for the sensitive adult, means that children need the time and opportunity to explore the possibilities that exist

within their developing minds and bodies.

Ann Halpern, an experienced kindergarten teacher, explains how she elaborates on the children's interests and develops her plans for working with a group of children.

A three-week curriculum unit, a study of houses, emerged from my observations of children's interests and work. The "house" is a common motif for children, evident through the frequent drawing, painting, and building of houses. This particular year, I had several non-English speaking children, some of whom had recently come from Laos. One day a Laotian girl built a house from blocks; it was different from other houses that had been built: it was on stilts. We gathered around the building to observe and discuss it. I was again aware of the children's interest and subsequently decided to begin a study of "house." This clearly was a subject of great personal meaning and importance. Each child would be able to contribute to our study since we all live in some kind of dwelling.

This sensitivity to the needs of children allows us to share in the world of the five-year-old.

Summary

Five-year-olds want to be open and honest with the adults in their lives. They want to share, because they want feedback and enlargement on their own experiences. Five-year-olds are beginning to understand the excitement of intellectual discovery and are beginning to see adults as resources for expanding their mental world. The world, seen through the eyes of the five-year-old, is an infinitely exciting, mysterious, and challenging place to discover and enjoy.

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Preparing for Your Child's Trip to the Hospital

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When a child goes to the hospital, it is an important family event, but one that is all too often accompanied by stress and anxiety. The medical effects are only part of what happens to a child during a hospitalization. A young child's separation from parents is frightening, because the child is not used to managing without parents or being in an unfamiliar environment. The support and comfort parents provide give their child the emotional strength to meet the demands of hospitalization.

Dr. Virginia Pomeranz, professor of pediatrics at Cornell University Medical College, says, "the single most crucial factor determining a small child's reaction to hospitalization is the parent's presence. Your presence tells your child that he or she has not been abandoned and that, despite present physical discomfort, everything will ultimately be all right."[1] Parents can help children during and after a hospital stay in two ways: by maintaining a trusting relationship and by helping the child maintain normal, everyday patterns of living whenever possible.

Even though you won't stop necessary medical procedures or eliminate pain, your presence makes the experience more bearable and demonstrates your loyalty to your youngster. Also, by explaining what is going to happen, you build your child's courage and reduce unfounded fears. Knowing what will happen functions for children "as a vaccination does: they get a mild and tolerable taste of the real event."[2]

Many familiar activities will still be possible. For instance, you know what quiet hobbies your child enjoys and you also can select and read books together. If a hospital stay is prolonged, schoolwork and visits with siblings are desirable activities. During a hospital stay, parents should maintain realistic expectations of behavior, because these familiar limits can enhance a child's sense of security.

Choosing a Hospital

When you know all you can about the trip to the hospital, you can make the best decision for your child, and, equally important, you communicate calm and confidence and sureness of purpose. (If you yourself are uneasy, you may be pleased to discover that hospitals today are friendlier and more cheerful than you remember from your childhood.)

When there is time for planning you can obtain assistance from a variety of sources. The first is the hospital clinic or your child's doctor. Once you begin your quest for information you may want a second medical opinion and advice from friends, relatives, and social agencies and especially from other parents who have been through the same experience. You also will want to give thought to selecting the hospital and find one that is best suited to your child's needs. Your community hospital will surely be the most convenient. If a longer trip is necessary, you and your doctor will need to explore the possibilities. You will want to know how far away the hospital is, what facilities are available for parents and what programs the hospital has for children. Is there a playroom and are there professional child life specialists to help younger children? Are there recreational activities and group meetings for adolescents? Are there hospital teachers? Many hospitals now use a primary care nursing system, which means that one nurse is assigned to the supervision and care of your child. Your child and the family will have a regular caregiver, making hospital relationships easier and more stable. If unusual surgery or care is needed, a university teaching hospital may be recommended. When selecting a teaching hospital, you will find that facilities are extensive and policies up-to-date and in line with present-day research. It is also true, however, that because it is a teaching hospital, this may mean more individuals caring for your child, with some changes in staffing on a monthly basis, and large groups of people coming on rounds and asking your child many questions.

You may be fortunate to find a hospital that has a "care by parent" unit or nearby housing where you and your child can stay while outpatient evaluation, treatment, or rehabilitation takes place. If inpatient care is necessary, you may find a hostel, perhaps with cooking and washing facilities, where parents can stay at reasonable prices. Groups of parents sharing living space can offer support to one another. Another common solution, and a very good one, is a hospital with living-in arrangements so that you can stay with your child. There will be a daybed or reclining chair in your child's room for resting and sleeping. This can become very tiring over a long period of time, but it is the best arrangement for several days. It is, however, necessary to insist on being able to stay, because hospitals that have these facilities often have them in limited numbers.

When making plans for your child, make plans for yourself as well. A grandparent, relative, or friend can give you some time away from the hospital or can visit with you during what may be tense but strangely boring hours. Sometimes the greatest help is someone to help at home, so that you are not trying to care for children at home and the child in the hospital at the same time.

Although all parents should make a tremendous effort to go to the hospital and stay with young children, at least at the beginning, it is often not possible to continue this routine. When it is necessary to return home or to work or to get a rest and change for yourself, make sure that your child knows that you are going to leave, and be sure to return when you are expected. Setting the hands on a toy clock can be reassuring to young children, even if they can't tell time! Telephoning from home or work can help. Even if visits or phone calls sadden your child or cause crying, they are still

1. "As They Grow/1-year-olds" in *Parents Magazine*, June 1982
2. Carol Hardgrove, "Emotional Inoculation: The 3 R's of Preparation" in *Preparing Children and Families for Health Care Encounters*, edited by Association for the Care of Children's Health, Washington, D.C., 1981

essential. They keep the ties to home alive and close to the surface. Most nursing staffs understand this and will take time to quiet and comfort your child after you leave. It is hard on parents but remember that your visits give strength and courage to hospitalized children. No wonder they hate to see you go!

Children's Special Needs During Hospitalization

A trip to the hospital, while presenting difficult times, also can have positive results for your child:

- a physical change will occur, which will improve the quality of your child's life in some important way;
- hospitalization can be a time to grow in empathy, make new friends, and learn from new experiences;
- your child will receive help and kindnesses from people who were previously strangers—a very rewarding experience.

Presenting these positive aspects to children helps them put the hospital stay in perspective. One four-year-old who had her tonsils removed said she was "going to have it done again" when her younger sister does!

A hospital has a life of its own. The signs, equipment, sounds, smells, and rhythms are strange. Hospital activities are often unfamiliar. Even finding one's way around the building is usually confusing! Many hospitals have "preadmission puppet shows" or tours that can reduce the bewilderment of the first visit. Nurses will tell children what usually happens during a hospital stay. If you are present, you will understand what your child heard and saw and can correct misconceptions that come up later.

Some hospital trips are emergency visits, making planning ahead impossible. Your presence and support at the time plus encouragement afterward to talk about what happened will help to allay anxiety.

All people going to the hospital need strong support, and children need even more reassurance than adults. The particular needs of children at different ages can be understood by learning about the developmental tasks they are dealing with at the time.

Photo by Media Services

Infants. An infant's first task is forming bonds to her primary caregiver. This bonding occurs most naturally with the mother, for both physiological and psychological reasons. We now know that these first interactions are not determined by the mother alone, but that an interplay of actions and reactions between infant and mother occurs almost immediately. Hospitalized babies should have a minimal number of caregivers and whatever can be done by the mother should be encouraged. When mother and child are separated at birth, the mother should have time to hold, see, and feel her baby before the separation. Neonatal intensive care units now include rocking chairs, supportive nurses, unobtrusive help, and they encourage mothers to help to care for their infants, thus normalizing their lives as much as possible and encouraging healthy bonding. This time together also builds a mother's confidence in her ability to care for her new baby.

At six months, the baby can readily tell the difference between family and strangers but remains dependent on the presence of the parent for stability. A responsive mother, by her playfulness with her infant, also reduces the monotony that can occur in the hospital. The mother's expertise and joy in responding to her baby's verbal, facial, and bodily cues enrich the infant's perceptual and social environment. Both parents and nurses can help babies confined to a crib by moving them about for a change of scene, by providing mobiles and other toys, and by casual, friendly interactions.

Toddlers. Toddlers are ready to try their wings and assert their newly won independence and mobility, but they do this best when a parent is within reach and sight. Toddlers will let go of a parent's hand, go to poke and examine a new child or toy, look back at the parent and laugh, and come toddling back. It is the parent's presence that allows the investigation! When separation occurs, toddlers do not have the confidence to try what they may otherwise be ready for. These youngsters are too young to understand why they are left and may feel frightened, abandoned, and unloved. A parent's presence provides a continuity that can help toddlers continue their developmental progress.

Three- to six-year-olds. Children between three and six show curiosity about time but have only a rudimentary understanding of it. They also have little understanding of cause and effect. They don't know why they are sick, and they don't know if their hospitalization will end. They cannot distinguish between the "helpful hurting" of treatment and the hurt of the illness itself. They feel victimized and abused by shots and treatments. They often think they are sick because they are bad, that medicine is poison and bedrest imprisonment. They need simple, honest explanations. They also need opportunities to play. Through play, they can act out what they are trying to understand. Play may help them express misconceptions, which they are unable to ask about directly, and an adult can correct a child's mistaken impressions.

Six- to twelve-year-olds. The child from six to twelve wants to be learning and wants to be with friends. Being away from parents at this age may not be a new experience, but youngsters need extra support from their family during hospitalization. Explanations about their body and how it works and what will be done to it are particularly important. These children want to know that the doctor won't do "anything else" in surgery. Because they are now interested in how their bodies work, they may incorrectly imagine things. For instance, knowing how important blood is, they may fear that the blood, being taken for lab tests, will "be all used up." Also, because school-aged children are very much involved with accomplishments, every effort should be made to keep them in close contact with school and schoolwork and to permit them to continue their hobbies and other activities.

Teenagers. Adolescents want to be independent but hospitals make them dependent. They seek affection from their friends and don't want to be forgotten. They fear being different and worry about any changes that may occur to their body, appearance, or lifestyle. Lying quietly or being confined or restricted from activity is frustrating to all children, but may be a special problem for teenagers.

Older teenagers are trying to establish their identity by reaching toward academic and career goals and illness interferes with this. They are comfortable thinking in abstractions and need open, understanding people to talk with—both parents and others.

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Preparing Your Child for the Trip

Children will need to know why they are going to the hospital, how long they will be there, and that *they will be coming home.* They need to know that the trip is necessary because the help they need cannot be given by parents, at home. When talking to children about a hospital stay, only explain what will affect them. For example, do not discuss surgery if that is not expected. Of course you will have to get answers to all these questions yourself, which may be difficult for several reasons. It is not because doctors want to be the only experts, but the information is so familiar to them that they may fail to explain it adequately to lay people. Also, we do not always remember everything we hear when information is upsetting, new, or frightening. We may need to be told twice. For this reason, it may be wise to take a friend along to a doctor's office. It is helpful to write down questions before seeing the doctor; it is often a good idea to ask the nurse to help us understand anything that remains unclear. Books also can help us learn more about our child's health needs.

How much ahead of time you begin these discussions with your child and just what you explain will depend on your child's age and temperament. For the youngest ones, very simple statements, close to the time of going, are appropriate. "Dr. Smith wants you to go to the hospital tomorrow, and I am also going to go and stay with you."

As the ability to understand increases, children want more information and more time to mull over this information and ask questions about it. *It is very important that you tell them openly before they overhear adults discussing the matter privately!* School-aged children want the doctor to tell them directly and do not want to be treated "like babies." Assurances that the illness is not their fault should be given. (If it *is* an accident, they should be told that medical professionals give the same good care to everyone, no matter what happened.) Being consulted about making decisions helps young people maintain positive self-concepts and some sense of control over their lives. However, you and the doctor will only want them to choose from wise alternatives. For example, John's mother and doctor thought that foot surgery should be done in the summer. But John asked "Why not spring vacation? I can go to school on crutches, and then I can be better for horseback riding this summer." Well, why not? Children often have different priorities and we should honor them when we can.

For adolescents, the parental role changes and it becomes increasingly important that the youngster share in decisions and choices whenever possible. Adolescents also have rights of privacy and confidentiality in seeking a doctor's medical advice themselves. They also want their personal privacy protected when talking confidentially to friends and parents.

Children who have been to the hospital often before may reach a time when what they know already does not help but causes them to react as if to the proverbial last straw. They just can't go through it again! Your understanding and sympathy coupled with your firm conviction that it must be done will be the most constructive.

Even though you have tried to learn what will take place, your child will probably ask something that never crossed your mind and will want your help in finding answers to the question. Preparation of this kind encourages a quick recovery because it reduces the stress of the unknown and it adds to the child's knowledge and mastery of the situation. It also maintains and builds the trust that exists between parent and child. Because this trust is so important, avoid making promises. Children believe that no emergency can interfere once you invoke the magic of the promised word. To a child, a promise is an iron-clad contract, something unbreakable "no matter what." For example, when it is time for you to leave your child, indicate when you expect to be back, but give yourself a little leeway.

When the time comes for the trip to the hospital, pack together, selecting a few belongings that will be comforting and that provide a connection to home. Many hospitals let children dress in their own clothes if they wish, and often let one stuffed animal or other possessions stay, even in the operating room! Ask for these comforts for your child. (Remember, many of the improvements made for children in hospitals have come about because parents have asked for them.) Also plan to take some activities to share: a book to read, a coin collection to mull over, a game to play.

All your efforts will pay off in the end. Your support will make the stay less frightening and stressful for your child, perhaps quickening recovery time, shortening the hospital stay, and helping to avoid some of the emotional upsets that occur after the homecoming.

Things to Consider

1. Are you satisfied that this hospitalization is necessary for your child? Can the child be taken care of as an outpatient? Is same-day surgery possible?

2. Are *you* prepared? Have you seen the hospital? Do you know what the procedures involve? Will they be painful or frightening?

3. Will you have help for yourself? At home? Someone to spell you at the hospital?

4. Have you talked to the hospital staff about what you want for your child? Will you spend the night? Will you accompany your child as far as surgery? Will you be present when your child awakens from surgery?

5. Have you told your child when and why he will go to the hospital? That he *will* be coming home?

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Let's Talk about Child Care

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Child Care

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It's early morning and in and around Anytown, New York, people are up and about their daily business. Little people are up and about, too.

Nineteen-month-old Mitzi and her father are on their way from their apartment to the neighboring home where Mitzi spends each day with the neighbor, the neighbor's two-year-old, and another neighbor's almost-five-year-old. "Lissa 'neakers," says Mitzi cheerfully to her father, who replies, "That's right, honey, we'll be at Lissa's house in a minute, and you can show her your new sneakers."

Three-year-old Brian and his mother left their farm home early for town, where Brian attends nursery school three mornings a week. Because Brian has no brothers or sisters to play with, he is looking forward to seeing his nursery school friends.

Four-year-old Hannah is watching for her beloved Auntie Anne to arrive. "Auntie" Anne, who is really no relation, comes to Hannah's suburban home every day to care for Hannah and her two little brothers. Hannah hopes it won't rain, so Auntie Anne can take them for a walk to the zoo.

Six-year-old Terry and his brother, Ricky, age two, are already at the day care center, having breakfast in the multipurpose room with a few other early arrivals. After Terry and the other "big kids" leave for school, the toddlers and preschoolers will go with their caregivers to the various rooms where they spend most of the day.

Chances are you know children like these. Perhaps they remind you of your own family or children in your neighborhood. Each child regularly spends some part of the day in the care of adults other than their parents. Mitzi's family day care home, Brian's nursery school, Hannah's in-home care, and Terry's and Ricky's day care center are all included when we talk about child care.

In recent years, child care has become an increasingly important part of life for many American families. More women—especially mothers of preschoolers—are working outside the home, many of them out of necessity. There are more two-paycheck families, as well as more single parents. Research on the long-term effects of preschool programs has focused attention on the educational and economic benefits that can be gained through quality early childhood education programs. Tax incentives and other work-related benefits have caught the interest of employers and employees alike. All of these factors have created a demand for a variety of child care programs.

It might be helpful to think of child care as a smorgasbord of programs designed to meet specific needs of children and families. If you're a working parent or full-time student, you probably need full-day care for your preschoolers, or before- and after-school care for older youngsters. Perhaps you're looking for a part-day experience that will enrich your child's life, give him or her a chance to play with other children, or develop skills that will be needed for school. Then again, you might need only occasional care for your child so that you can take a course, do volunteer work, help with the family business or farm, or get some needed time for yourself. If you're an employer or community organizer, you might be looking at the child care programs that exist in your community, with an eye to what services need to be added or expanded.

What Are the Types of Child Care Programs?

The number of child care options varies from community to community. Let's look at the full range of possibilities that could be available.

Day Care Center. Provides group care for children away from their own homes for all or part of a day. Most centers enroll three- to five-year-olds; a growing number also offers care for infants, toddlers, and school-age children. Fees vary, depending on funding; some centers have a sliding-fee scale or offer scholarships for low-income families.

Day care centers that enroll more than three children for more than three hours a day must be licensed by the New York State Department of Social Services and must comply with specific requirements for facility, health, safety, staffing, and educational program.

Drop-in Care. Provides supervised play on an irregular or as-needed basis, usually for less than three hours a day; preregistration is often encouraged. Some programs offer drop-in care

only; some day care centers and family day care homes also offer drop-in care as a special service. Staff may be professionals, volunteers, or parents. An hourly rate is usually charged.

Employer-sponsored or Employer-supported Day Care. Day care provided by or subsidized by an employer for employees. Care may be in a day care center at or near the worksite, purchased by the employer in one or more community day care centers or family day care homes, or provided for employees in the form of vouchers.

Employer-supported child care can also take the form of donations and contributions to child care programs, support for community child care councils, information and referral services, and family-oriented personnel policies.

Family Day Care. Provided in the caregiver's home for all or part of the day. Most family day care providers accept children from infancy through school-age; some limit enrollment to specific age groups. A high quality family day care home will provide many of the services offered by a day care center, but in a homelike setting.

Family day care homes must meet licensing regulations of the New York State Department of Social Services if three or more children are cared for, including the provider's children under six years of age. No more than six children can be cared for at any one time; fewer if any are infants.

Head Start. Federally-funded program for three- to five-year-olds from low-income families. Offers a comprehensive child development program, including health, nutrition, education, and social services. Parent involvement is an integral part of the program. Head Start programs can be part-day, full-day, or home-based; they usually follow a school-year schedule. There is no fee.

In-Home Care. Full- or part-day care provided by an adult (sometimes a relative) in the child's own home. If the care is on a regular-paid basis, the caregiver is considered

an employee and is entitled to minimum wage and certain other benefits. In-home care can be expensive for very small families, but may be less expensive than other kinds of care for families with three or more children.

Migrant Child Care. State and federally-funded program provides full-day care for children of migrant parents employed in agriculture in New York State. Most centers are open only during peak agricultural seasons. Developmental program includes education, health, and nutrition. There is no fee.

Nursery School. Provides social and educational programs for three- to five-year-olds. Nursery schools operate for less than three hours a session, two to five times a week, and often follow a school-year schedule. Some nursery schools emphasize a particular philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Waldorf). Fees vary, depending on schedule and funding.

Nursery schools may voluntarily register with the New York State Education Department, which sets guidelines for facility, staff, and program.

Nursery School Cooperative. Part-day program like other nursery schools, but requires parent participation to administer the school and to assist professional teachers in the classrooms. Fees vary, depending on schedule, sources of funding, and amount of parent participation.

New York State Experimental Pre-K. State-funded public school prekindergarten program for three- and four-year-olds from low socioeconomic areas. Provides comprehensive health and social services, parent involvement, and developmental program. Pre-K programs are usually part-day and follow a school schedule. There is no fee.

Parent Babysitting Cooperative. Occasional care of children is shared by a group of families without exchanging money. Most co-ops assign "points" for services based on number of children, hours of care, etc. Members follow agreed-upon guidelines and share record-keeping responsibilities.

Play Group. Parents (usually mothers) take turns providing activities for one another's preschool children. Most play groups meet for two to three hours once or twice a week. Play groups are designed to meet the social needs of children and provide some free time for parents on the days that they are not in charge of the group.

School-age Child Care. Provides supervision and planned recreational activities for school-age children in the hours before- and after-school and at times when school is not in session. School-age child care may be offered by day care centers, family day care homes, public schools, youth recreation groups (Y's, boys clubs, girls clubs, youth camps, parks and recreation departments), churches, and other community groups. Fees vary, depending on ages of the children, hours, services provided, and sources of funding.

Special Children's Centers. Provide services for handicapped preschool children. Names and types of programs differ in various communities. For information, contact the New York State Education Department's Regional Early Childhood Direction Centers.

But What about Parents?

No discussion of child care would be complete without emphasizing the significance of parents in a child's life. The increasing use of child care arrangements by American families does not cancel out the importance of the family as the basic unit of our society, nor the vital role that parents play as teachers, models, and counselors for their children.

In fact, the vast majority of American children are cared for in their own homes by their own parents, whether the parents work outside the home or not. Unfortunately, that same fact also tells us that because many of the parents who care for their own children also work or study full time, a large number of youngsters actually fend for themselves for some part of their day. Some parents solve this problem by working different shifts so that they can provide their own child care and still hold down jobs. These parents rarely have the opportunity to spend time with each other or with the entire family. In either case, reliable and affordable child care would provide a valuable support system.

The point is that child care—in its many forms—should be viewed as a supplement to parental care, not a substitute for it. In many ways, child care provides the extended family that can help today's small nuclear family

function effectively in a changing world. As such, child care arrangements should provide the same loving, responsible environment that good parents provide.

Is There a Best Kind of Care?

The choice of a child care arrangement can only be made by individual parents who, after all, know their own situation and children best. Certainly there is no one kind of child care program that's best for *all* children. Some children thrive in a center-based group program; others are happier with the smaller group size and homelike atmosphere of their own home or a family day care home.

Whatever the setting—day care center, nursery school, family day care home—the key factor in choosing child care is the *quality* of the care itself. Most authorities agree that a high quality child care program should offer:

- knowledgeable, loving **caregivers** who understand and care about children and who work with the family to provide the best possible care for each child;
- a safe, friendly **environment** that provides the necessary ingredients for a child's healthy growth and development—intellectual, physical, social, and emotional; and
- a variety of **activities**—both formal and informal—that are appropriate to the child's age and developmental level.

Does Quality Child Care Make a Difference?

Recent research has shown that good child care programs can produce many benefits. Cornell professors Irving Lazar and Richard Darlington report that disadvantaged children enrolled in high quality preschool programs performed better in school, were more likely to graduate from high school, and, in later years, fared better in the job market than similar youngsters who had no preschool experience. Dr. David Weikert of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and others have found that these social and educational benefits can mean substantial savings to public schools, the welfare system, and the community as a whole. Others have pointed out that child care programs contribute directly to the local economy; care providers buy goods and services from local suppliers and hire local residents who pay taxes and trade with local merchants. In addition, proponents of school-age child care programs argue that before- and after-school programs can reduce juvenile vandalism and petty thievery, with resulting savings to the community.

At the present time, however, not every community can boast a full complement of child care services nor guarantee the quality of existing programs. In many communities, child care programs are hard to find; often there is no central listing or information and referral service to help parents find the kind of care they want for their children. As a result, many families are faced with making child care arrangements that are less than ideal.

The need for high quality child care programs continues to grow as the numbers of two-paycheck families and single parents increase. Through the combined efforts of concerned parents, educators, legislators, employers, child advocates, and community organizers, the quality and quantity of child care services can be tailored to meet the needs of both parents and children.

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Protecting Children in New York State

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The daily care of children requires large amounts of time and physical energy in addition to much patience, ingenuity, warmth, and sensitivity. Parents want to give children all the love and protection possible, but the constant hard work, demands for time and attention, and pressures of being a parent can be frustrating.

The majority of parents and caregivers are able to cope with the demands of child rearing. They are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and know where and how to seek help in a crisis or stressful situation. But some parents react to frustration and stress by striking out at their children when they cannot cope with the demands of child rearing or are unable to deal with crisis situations.

Some parents are unaware of the basic needs of their children and do not know what to expect from them. Feelings of anger, frustration, or inadequacy may be provoked by a crying baby who cannot be consoled; a two-year-old who is "into everything"; a child who has just mastered the word "no"; or a four-year-old who insists on having his or her own way. Parents who abuse and neglect their children may not have had their own needs met for love, sensitivity, and understanding as children, and find it difficult to fulfill these needs in their children.

Certain characteristics of children also may provoke abuse or neglect. Congenital and acquired physical or behavioral traits that make children different or especially difficult to care for may contribute to stressful family situations. A baby with colic may not be able to respond to a parent's attempt to provide love and care causing the parent to become angry and frustrated. A child may become the target of a mother's anger and revenge because the child physically resembles the father who has brutalized and abandoned her. The immature parent cannot cope with the needs of these children.

Crises play a crucial role in the lives of parents and may precipitate abuse. Crises are a fact of life and can involve illness, the death of a relative, finances, housing, birth of a child, loss of a job, separation from close friends, the breakdown of the car or television, or any number of other problems. Some parents lack the self-confidence, ingenuity, and ability to seek help necessary to deal with crisis. They may not have the support of a spouse, family, and friends, and may not know where or how to seek help. Crisis situations that are not managed adequately last longer and eventually become unmanageable. Parents in this situation may feel desperately helpless and end up turning on their child, as illustrated in the following example.

Susan, a mother of a one-year-old son, had constant arguments with her husband who was unemployed. Her baby demanded a lot of time and attention and she felt overwhelmed and isolated from her family and friends. One night her husband stormed out of the house after a violent argument. Shortly thereafter, the baby refused to eat his dinner, created a mess, and caused more frustration. Susan was unable to deal with her anger and yanked the child out of the high chair so hard she broke his arm.

What Constitutes Child Abuse and Neglect

Under New York State law, persons responsible for the care of a child under 18 years must meet basic standards of care such as providing shelter, education, and emotional care, and must refrain from acts which threaten the health and welfare of the child.

Some parents never abuse or neglect their children no matter what the circumstances. Some children do not misbehave, and still get abused. We all have the capacity to strike out in anger, pain, or frustration. We can recognize when parents need help by knowing the signs of abuse and neglect.

Child abuse and neglect usually occur in private. No one knows exactly how many children are affected. The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about one million children are abused and neglected in this country and two thousand children die annually.

The New York State Department of Social Services received 55,937 reports in 1980 of suspected child abuse and maltreatment involving 97,483 children. In 40 percent of the cases in which a determination was made, there was evidence that child abuse and maltreatment had occurred and 86 deaths were confirmed.

What Are the Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect?

The effects of inadequate care, particularly during the first two years of life, are profound and enduring. The most evident effects are a deep lack of basic trust and confidence, and a tragically low sense of self-esteem which persists into adulthood. Child absue and neglect affect not only the child but the family and the community in the following ways:

- a child can suffer short- and long-term physical, mental, and emotional damage;
- parents feel guilty, lose respect for themselves;
- the family can be destroyed, especially when actions to help the child and the family are not appropriately employed;
- the community suffers because abuse and neglect lead to increased crime and violence;
- the community suffers because the families are not likely to be productive members of society nor are the children when they grow older. Instead they are likely to become a burden on social services and criminal justice systems.

What Are the Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect?

To ensure early, immediate help for victims and their families, it is important to recognize the signs of maltreatment.

Child's Appearance

- unexplained or unusual bruises, welts, bite marks, or fractures;
- frequent injuries, even if explained as accidental;
- often dirty; tired; no energy; hungry;
- clothes dirty or wrong for the weather;
- wears long sleeves or other concealing clothing to hide injuries;
- needs glasses, dental care, or has other obvious medical needs.

Child's Behavior

- wary of physical contact; avoids other people including children; seems to be alone frequently for long periods of time;
- appears too anxious to please; allows other people to say and do things to him/her without protest;
- unpleasant, hard to get along with, demanding;
- often doesn't obey;
- shows no enjoyment in other children or toys;
- cries often or little with no expectation of being comforted;
- avoids physical contact with adults;
- seeks affection from any adult;
- engages in delinquent acts or runs away.

Parent's or Caretaker's Behavior

- has unrealistic expectations of child;
- uses discipline unsuitable for the child's age, sex, behavior, or which is cruel;
- offers an explanation of child's injury that doesn't make sense, or doesn't fit the injury, or offers no explanation at all;
- is isolated from friends, neighbors, or cannot be located;
- seems unconcerned about child; seldom touches or looks at child;
- keeps child confined for long periods of time;
- experiences severe stress due to crisis, e.g., death of relative, arrest, relocation, marital problems;
- leaves child alone, unattended, or without adult supervision;
- lacks understanding of child's physical and emotional needs.

What Do You Do When Abuse or Neglect Is Suspected?

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, you should immediately call the toll-free statewide telephone number for the New York State Central Register in the New York State Department of Social Services. Reports may be made seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

1-800-342-3720

You need have only a reasonable suspicion that child abuse and neglect are occurring before making the report. Child Protective Services will investigate and determine whether child maltreatment has occurred.

When you call, give as much information as possible including:

- child's (children's) name, address, sex, age;
- facts about the injury or suspected harm to the child;
- any knowledge of earlier injuries or problems;
- name of person responsible for suspected maltreatment;
- facts about the family;
- your name and where you can be reached.

Anonymous reports are accepted; however, persons who report cases are encouraged to give their names so that if further help or information is needed, contact can be made. All reports and any information gathered during the investigation of the report are confidential. Under the law, if you report in good faith, you have immunity from criminal or civil liability.

After a report is made, it is recorded in New York State's Central Register, and is sent to the local county office of Child Protective Services (in New York City, Office of Field Services, Special Services for Children). Within 24 hours a caseworker begins an investigation of the report. The caseworker must inform the subject, in writing, that a report exists, and that he or she has certain rights to change any information in it or have it erased.

The caseworker must see to the safety needs of the child immediately. If the risk of harm is too great, the caseworker has the power to remove the child. The caseworker usually offers such services as counseling, day care, homemaker, parent aids, or self-help groups to help the family stay together. Lengthy, intensive work with the family is usually needed before abusive or neglectful behavior is abandoned.

The caseworker cannot force the family to accept services. If the child is in danger and the family refuses to accept services, Family Court may impose services or remove the child from the home. Caseworkers customarily try to make a voluntary agreement which protects the child and keeps the family together.

How Can You Help Children and Families?

There are many positive steps you can take to protect children and help families under stress.

If you are a parent under stress:*

• Learn to let off steam in safe ways and keep the hard job of being a parent under control. When your child's behavior is troublesome, use stress relievers. Count to ten; put the child in a safe area and go to another room; take ten minutes to do whatever relaxes you the best, change your routine, take a walk, or call a friend.

• Call a community agency. They are there to help you. Some programs don't ask your name. Ask them what kind of help they can give you for your problem or need. If someone is not available the minute you call—don't give up!

• Call New York State Parents Anonymous at their toll-free hotline—1-800-462-6406—which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A trained volunteer will answer the phone and offer supportive advice.

*Adopted from *Families in Stress* by Carol A. Johnson, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, US-DHEW Publication No. (OHDS) 80-30162 (1979).

If you are a friend or relative:

• Be the person a distressed parent can talk to. Listen without judging. Help talk out anger and frustration.

• Offer to babysit or take care of the children for a few days if you can.

• Urge troubled families to seek help. Learn what is available in your neighborhood and tell your friends or relatives about it. Offer to make an appointment and go with them on their first visit.

• If efforts like this do not help and a child is in danger or is being hurt, you should call: 1-800-342-3720, the New York State Central Register reporting number. Upon request, your name will be withheld from the family.

If someone doesn't get involved, the abuse or neglect will continue. As it continues, it gets worse. Hundreds of children die or suffer permanent injury. The abusing parent may go to jail and the family may be broken up. None of this needs to happen.

Some parents—or even older children—seek help on their own. Most do not. They need an outsider to get the help process started.

The most important thing you can do is to get involved. Reach out to families in need with small acts of help. Find out what is being done to educate the public about child and family problems and sources of help. Volunteer your time. Join groups who are working to improve or build services, such as day care, parent self-help groups, parenting education, foster care, adoptive homes.

Encourage local government or organizations to play a more active role in supporting services for families. Participate in the annual planning process for child and family services. Federal and state laws require an annual public hearing for social service plans and your views need to be heard.

The cycle of child abuse and neglect can be broken. It is up to us.

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Lucinda A. Noble, Director. Reprinted 10/83 CP 5M 8870

"Not Another Meeting!" Planning for Child Care While Adults Meet

by Jennifer Birckmayer

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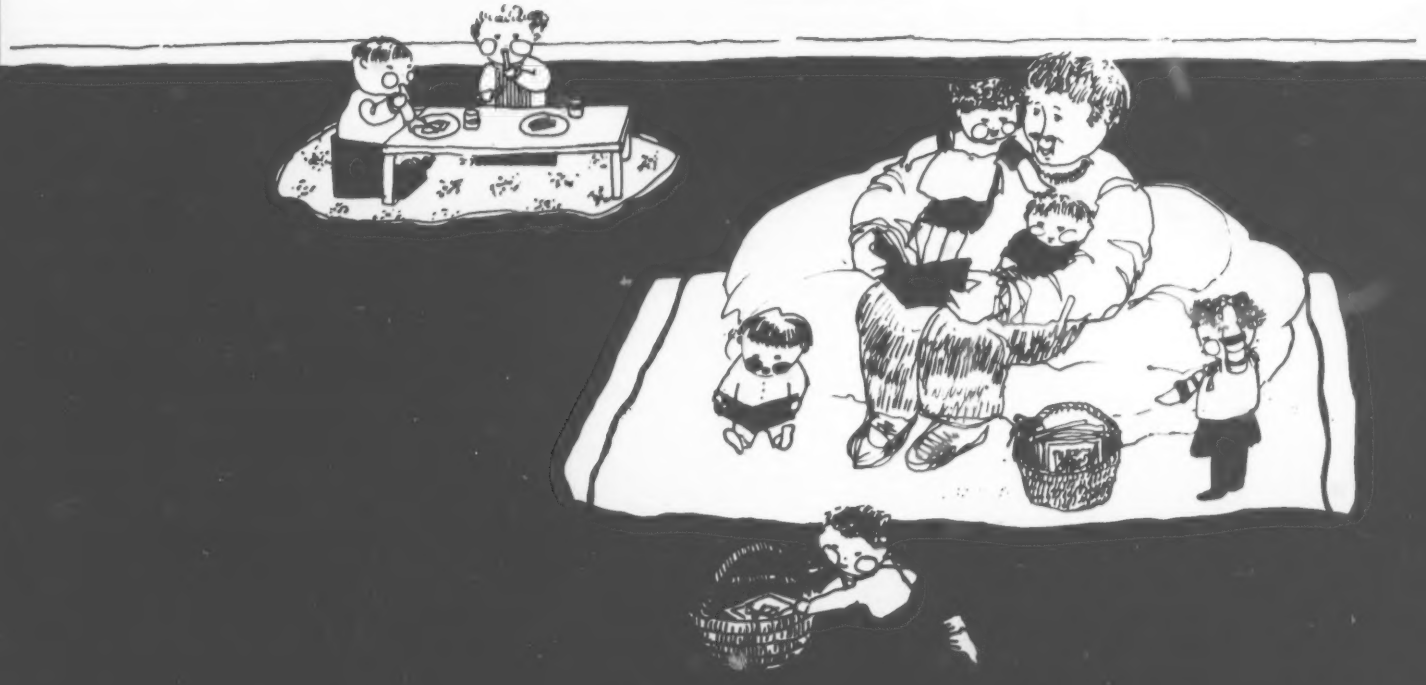
Mrs. X. works hard at her job during the day and looks forward to a night out each week. She has an inquiring mind and loves to learn new skills, so for her the ideal evening away from home involves a class, usually sponsored by a school or community organization, in the small city in which she lives. Mrs. X. is a conscientious single parent on a limited budget and can attend only those classes for which child care is provided. Her 2-year-old son, Mark, and her 4-year-old daughter, Dolores, accompanied her eagerly to her first classes. But after three experiences in a room full of children and cartons of miscellaneous toys, all under the supervision of one harried volunteer, Mark has begun to sob as they approach the building and Dolores said indignantly, "Not *another* meeting!" the last time her mother informed the children that it was time for her class. Mrs. X. is beginning to feel guilty. She is afraid she will have to give up going to classes if her children continue to be unhappy in the child care room.



Mr. Y. is the parent of two young children. His wife, a nurse, works the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift at a local hospital. The children are at home with their mother during the day and with a high school babysitter until Mr. Y. gets home from work at 5:30. Both parents want to take an active role in community life, so they are delighted when Mr. Y. is invited to join the board of directors of an important local organization. They are unsure whether Mr. Y. should accept this invitation, however, because they feel strongly that their children should not spend more than three hours each day with a babysitter. "If only—," they say to each other, "If only the children could go too and participate in a good preschool experience while the board conducts a meeting." They agree that spending more time with a sitter would create a strain for the children and that the family cannot afford the additional cost. Mr. Y. declines the invitation.

Miss Q. and her 3-year-old son, David, belong to a church that has a strong commitment to reinforcing and supporting family life. Every Wednesday evening they go to the church. David plays happily with a small group of children his own age in a spacious room well equipped with carefully selected toys and educational materials while his mother attends a Bible study meeting. The children are supervised by Mrs. G., an experienced teacher with a deep interest in young children. She considers her weekly volunteer activity a serious, important contribution to her church—an opinion shared by her pastor and other members of the congregation. A teenager, who has been carefully recruited and trained as a part of a local 4-H project and community service program, assists Mrs. G. each week.

Part of each Bible study meeting is devoted to a discussion of parent-child relationships. Miss Q. finds the support and advice she receives from the other parents in the group and the appreciation and understanding offered by Mrs. G. an enormous help in her struggle to be an effective parent. David's pleasure in his group experience and the growth that both she and Mrs. G. observe each week have reinforced Miss Q.'s conviction that these evenings at the church are among the most valuable experiences she and David have as a family.

Obviously not all parents require child care to attend meetings or study groups. Many programs such as Head Start schedule events for parents while children attend their regularly scheduled classroom activities. Often, however, events that could include parents of young children effectively screen them out by providing inadequate child care or, in many cases, failing to provide child care at all. As a result, many parents wait with dread for the cry from their child, "Not *another* meeting!" instead of looking forward to a mutually pleasant, brief time away from home. In addition to contributing to parental peace of mind, good child care experiences during adult meetings offer other advantages.

- Children develop a pleasant feeling of independence while at the same time learning that parents need to pursue their own interests.
- Children have the opportunity to enjoy social relationships that may not be available to them elsewhere.
- Children are exposed to age-appropriate activities parents cannot always provide at home.
- Parents are given a chance to see their children enjoying friendships and activities away from home.
- Parents observe other children who behave (or don't behave) as their children do.
- Parents get to know other parents of young children, and opportunities for mutual support and encouragement may evolve.
- Parents learn, through observation, about activities, equipment, and guidance techniques they may not have thought of or heard about before.
- Parents and children often find that a "break" from each other is mutually refreshing.

Above all, parents are reinforced in their perception of themselves as capable of exposing their children to the very best child care available, and families increase their feelings that each member is an important and respected part of a social group. An experience designed as a convenience can therefore contribute to positive growth of both parents and children. Sometimes arrangements can be made for children to join their parents before the meeting is over. A special family activity such as a simple art project, singing, playing a game, or creating a holiday decoration seems to enhance the sense of pleasure and accomplishment for children and adults.

The following suggested steps are designed to help in planning for and implementing good child care while adults are meeting.

1. Assess the child care needs of the parents who will be meeting. How many of their children will attend if good care is provided? How old are these children? Have they ever been separated from their parents before? (If not, careful arrangements should be made for a gradual and gentle separation.) What special needs do the children have (handicaps, health or dietary restrictions, etc.)? Parents should be involved in the assessment and planning process as much as possible. The more they are involved, the more important and comfortable they will feel.

2. Identify community resources that may be of help in arranging child care. Cooperative Extension, day care councils, local chapters of the Association for the Education of Young Children, Head Start, prekindergarten or day care centers, college departments of early childhood education, and individuals with expertise in working with children and families are among the many resources that are probably available.

3. Ask for help! In addition to requesting help from any or all of the resources listed above, ask for donations or loans of materials and equipment, for volunteers, and for sponsorship and other assistance you may need. The concept of supporting family unity is a very "salable" idea! Contact local youth groups—with careful training, teenagers can become superb child care providers and, in the process, receive important preparenting or prevocational experience. Adult groups such as Green Thumb, RSVP, Foster Grandparents, or Senior Citizens are also potential sources of support.

4. Do not attempt to put on a one-person show—teamwork is essential. One person cannot facilitate an adult group and structure a good experience for children at the same time. Each component requires a high degree of commitment and constancy, and no one can be in two places at once.

5. Donations and volunteer labor may be scarce commodities in your community. Parent involvement is crucial in solving this problem. Parents may decide to pay for child care or, as a group, may appeal to a local church, individual, or agency for services or funds.

6. Demonstrate the following principles of effective parenting in all attempts to implement good child care:

- No one's perfect—we all make mistakes.
- Child care is a team effort. No one person can be solely responsible for a group of young children. Even if only one child is being cared for, an adult or group should be available to give the caregiver emotional support, advice, encouragement, relief, and help in emergencies.
- It's okay to ask for help, to admit that as a caregiver you don't know what to do or to

have moments when you feel impatient or exasperated. (It's also okay to share feelings that little children are enchanting, remarkable, funny, and fun.) A sense of humor is always valuable.

- Children need a consistent relationshp with one or two responsible caregivers—constant changes in supervision undermine good care.
- Caregivers who are responsible for the same child at different times need to communicate clearly about that child to ensure continuity of care.
- People from every educational background and with varying amounts of experience can all benefit from well-organized training. Preservice and in-service training for child care provides an essential component of an effective program. (See "Resources" for suggested training materials.) During preservice sessions participants can brainstorm a list of necessary supplies for the children such as name tags, diapers, and appropriate toys and games.

7. Define high-quality child care as the friendly, warm, and safe environment provided by loving, knowledgeable caregivers for children whose parents are temporarily unable to be with them or to be with them for only a brief part of the meeting. A good child care arrangement is based upon the mutual respect of parents and caregivers, open and continuous communication, and a shared commitment to the well-being of children.

8. Choose caregivers who, in addition to enjoying and valuing children,
   - are warm and friendly
   - are calm and gentle
   - treat each child as an individual with a different personality
   - accept and respect a variety of family and cultural values
   - read to and talk with children
   - provide activities appropriate for the age of the children
   - encourage children to express themselves
   - have previous training and/or experience with children
   - serve nutritious snacks
   - expect to discuss children with their parents
   - express pride in the job of caring for children

9. Choose a child care area that has
   - a clean, comfortable appearance
   - adequate space (35 square feet per child)
   - a place for a child to find privacy if the group is overwhelming
   - safety caps on electrical outlets

a locked cabinet for storage of household and other poisons
an alternate exit in case of fire
adequate heat, light, and ventilation
convenient access to bathrooms
emergency first-aid equipment and access to a telephone

10. Check with the sponsoring agency to be sure that appropriate insurance will cover the caregivers and the children.

11. Make provisions for quiet activities, rest, privacy, and perhaps for naps if the program is to take place at the end of the day or during the evening.

12. If the children are of widely varying ages, make all arrangements with particular care.

Good child care, however brief, provides the necessary ingredients for a child's healthy growth and development, intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. The establishment of good child care requires teamwork, careful planning, energy, time, and motivation, but is a surprisingly easy and pleasant task when enthusiastic adults decide to do it.

Resources

The following publications are available from Distribution Center, 7 Research Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14850, or from any county Cooperative Extension office in New York State.

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Spedding, Polly. **The Child Care Notebook.** Media Services/Printing, B10 MVR, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853.

Audio-Visual Resources

Come in and Play: Found and Scrounged Environments for Children (Slide/tape set 250) can be obtained from the Audio-Visual Resource Center, 8 Research Park, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850. A poster entitled **Learning Is...** is also available.

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Becoming Part of Your Child's School

by Christiann Dean

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A father invites his daughter's third-grade class to visit his work site.

A mother cares for her own and her neighbor's babies once a week while the neighbor volunteers in the math lab of their fifth-graders' school.

A couple whose son will enter kindergarten next fall schedules visits to two neighborhood schools to observe and discuss their programs.

At the beginning of each school year, a mother sends notes to her three children's teachers to let them know her work schedule and to encourage them to contact her about her children's progress.

After retiring from a long career working for the railroads, a grandfather volunteers in local elementary classes studying transportation.

Although his work schedule makes it difficult to attend daytime conferences, a father sends his son's teacher a note to let her know how pleased he is with his son's math progress and to request a telephone conference.

A group of parents and teachers meets monthly to hear local speakers discuss such topics as research on children's sports, the effect of TV on children, and the district's new reading program.

A mother who has recently immigrated to the United States shares a traditional meal with her child's class.

What do all these busy people have in common? They are enriching their children's education by becoming part of their schools. They have discovered ways to communicate their concern and to share their talents despite transportation problems or inexperience with classroom teaching methods.

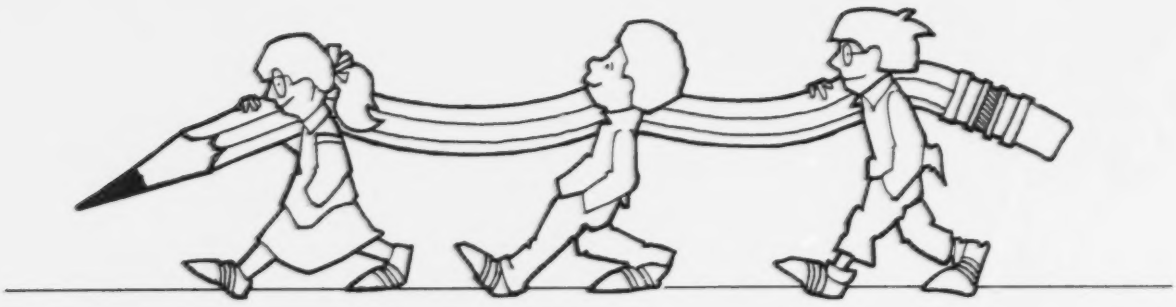
Children, teachers, parents, and school administrators can all benefit from creative parent involvement in schools. What can better motivate children to learn than the knowledge that their parents and teachers all value their education and keep in touch about their progress? The common image of a fearful child carrying a note about his or her negative behavior from teacher to parent is eliminated when there is a frequent exchange of brief notes or calls between home and school through which teachers and parents share information about the child's strengths, progress, and needed changes. Classroom studies spring to life when family members share travel, job, and other experiences. Classrooms are better suited to children's needs when parents and teachers share the responsibility of matching students and teachers.

Parents who have become part of their children's school lives through notes, conferences, phone calls, or volunteering report many benefits for themselves and their children. Parents who volunteer for the school board or curriculum committees know the satisfaction, as well as the long hours and many compromises, of helping to shape school policy. Parents who volunteer or observe at school learn about their own children through contact with others of the same age. For some parents, voluntarily sharing their talents is a first step toward a new career. Others feel a great sense of satisfaction from giving to the community through the school. The major motivation, however, for most parents to become involved in their child's school is the child. Learning or behavior problems can often be avoided if parents and teachers communicate honestly in the early stages of a child's education. Parents who are knowledgeable about their child's learning program can offer their child and school personnel much-needed support and encouragement. Parents who have an ongoing relationship with their child's teachers often find them to be helpful sounding boards and supporters as the child develops and changes.

Parents have ultimate responsibility for their child for nearly two decades. Although they do not need to know how to teach the intricacies of the metric system or the geography of Central America, they do have a right and a responsibility to become familiar with the people and institutions that share the joys and difficulties of their child's growth.

Parent involvement also has many advantages for teachers. Although notes, phone calls, conferences, classroom visits, and the like absorb precious time from a teacher's schedule, the potential benefits are so great that many teachers encourage parent involvement in school life. The traditional view of education overlooks the invaluable resources of parents and creates stress for teachers, who often feel they are responsible for "delivering" an education. Teachers and parents can become key supporters of one another. Time invested in developing mutual goals and methods with a parent volunteer, for example, can enrich the classroom routine and provide students with small-group or individual tutoring.

Parents, teachers, students, and school administrators are all important partners in the educational process. If children or parents are considered recipients rather than partners, however, teachers and school administrators



are likely to feel they must "deliver" an education, and parents are less apt to understand and therefore support the educational program. Involving parents in school life can be time-consuming and may be viewed as risky by schools that are used to having ultimate authority, but it is the only way for schools to gain the community support they need. Many school administrators realize the benefits of parent involvement in schools and are seeking to integrate parents into their programs. When a newsletter for school administrators published a notice about Cornell Family Matters "Cooperative Communication between Home and School" workshops for parents and teachers, a steady flow of requests came from principals and superintendents. One wrote, "In today's world it is very difficult to survive in education without the backing and help from parents. We are very interested in being successful with our youth and would very much appreciate the support that parents can show toward administrators, teachers, curricula, and schools in general. Would you please send me information about developing parent-teacher rapport and communication."

Parents can help school personnel translate their belief in home-school partnership into reality by becoming participants in the school experience. Try to put yourself in the shoes of a teacher receiving these two phone calls:

Hello, Mrs. Williams? This is Serena Taggart, Isabel's mother. I wanted to let you know right off this fall that I'm delighted that you've gotten Isabel interested in science projects. Yesterday she asked if I could take her to the library this weekend to see their exhibit on the planets. . . . I have an idea I'd like to talk over with you. Is this a good time? . . . Oh, good. I was thinking that the students might learn a lot from making papier-mache models of the planets and hanging them from the ceiling of the classroom. I work in a doctor's office and have Wednesday afternoons off. I could come in Wednesday afternoons for the next month and help with this project if you think it would fit in with what they're learning.

Hello, Mrs. Williams, this is Jean Taylor, Andy's mother. I'm really upset about the math grade you gave Andy on his midyear report card. The math papers he's been bringing home all year seem to have a lot of mistakes on them. This can't go on any longer. I can come in every morning and drill the students with flash cards. . . . What do you mean you don't use flash cards anymore? They worked when I was in school, and I know my times tables!

Which approach is likely to get the parent meaningfully involved in her child's education?

How often do you say, "If only I'd said . . ."? Few of us communicate confidently and clearly all the time. Children, parents, teachers, and school administrators are all challenged to articulate ideas and to listen carefully. Unfortunately, many factors inhibit clear communication: lack of clarity, intimidation, defensiveness, time pressures, use of educational "jargon."

People who have insufficient information or who are unaccustomed to describing ideas publicly may fail to express their ideas clearly. Or people may feel intimidated because they think the person they are speaking to is more knowledgeable or has more power. *Each person who cares about a child's education has a right to communicate with the other people who care about that child.* You will be most effective if you can express your ideas in a positive manner. Find ways to let others know

that you respect their opinions and rights. If you can't find any common viewpoint, you're unlikely to be successful in making your thoughts known. Ideally, parents' ideas will be welcomed by teachers, and teachers' ideas will be respected by parents. Each of us can help make this ideal a reality by communicating in ways that reduce defensiveness.

One common bond between all the adults who care about a child's education is likely to be a lack of time. Parents with job or child care responsibilities find it hard to get to school; teachers have full schedules; principals are pressured by the demands of record keeping and administrative decisions. Let one another know that you respect each other's time demands by choosing convenient times to get in touch.

Each profession has its own language or jargon. Although an architect would not assume that the public understands architecture terminology, teachers and school administrators too often use unfamiliar terms when speaking with parents. Don't be afraid to ask what an I.E.P. or a cluster is if your child's teacher uses these or other unfamiliar words or phrases. You will be helping other families by encouraging teachers and administrators to explain these terms. Although many factors contribute to positive communication between home and school, the most important aspect of positive home-school relationships is *communicated goodwill.* Making it clear to your child's teacher early in the year that you want to be an active participant in the child's education and that you're interested in being helpful is the cornerstone for cooperative communication.

These guidelines have helped parents who wanted to become part of their children's schools.

Find a positive way to get to know your child's teacher *early in the school year.*

Let the teacher and principal know when you are pleased with something one of them has done. Be specific.

If your requests and suggestions do not elicit the response you had hoped for, be persistent. Find another way to describe your idea.

You may be ahead of your time, and it may take time for the school to set up a mechanism for responding to your ideas.

Offer no more than you can deliver. It is better to keep a weekly volunteer commitment than to back out of a daily commitment.

Describe your idea, suggestion, or concern briefly. Specify two or three alternate responses that would be acceptable to you, and leave the way open for the school to offer other ideas.

Put yourself in the teacher's or principal's shoes. How would you respond?

School administrators who ask tough but fair questions at the beginning of a proposed project may turn out to be its best supporters.

Teachers have prepared for many years for their work. They are more likely to be open to parent involvement in education if they know that you respect their training and contributions. Ask teachers for their suggestions.

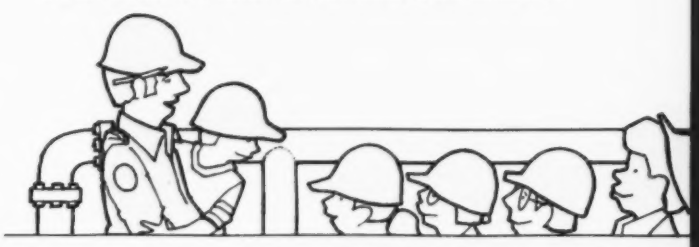
When you have a complaint, discuss it with someone who is responsible for it rather than with your neighbors.

Never pit teachers against school administrators. Students will be the losers.

How can you enrich your child's school? You might begin by brainstorming* ways for parents to become involved in their children's education. Other parents have thought of these ideas:

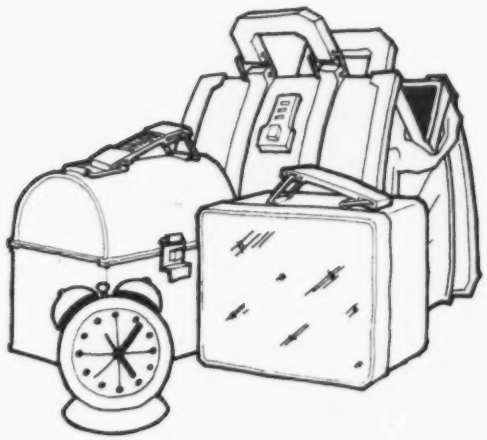
participating in parent-teacher conferences
fund raising

*"Brainstorming" means quickly listing, without passing judgment on the ideas generated. After the brainstorming, the list should be reviewed and unrealistic ideas eliminated.



exchanging notes with teachers
volunteering in the classroom
volunteering for special events
becoming a member of the PTA/PTO
becoming a member of the school board
reviewing their children's homework every day
helping their children learn to communicate by discussing decisions with them
taking care of a school volunteer's preschoolers during volunteer hours
supervising on the playground
starting or participating in parent advisory groups
asking retired grandparents to volunteer
sharing special talents
asking questions of school administrators and teachers
reading with their children
encouraging their children's school progress

After you have compiled your list, you will need to gather some information from others who care about your child's education. What would your child's teacher add if you showed him or her your list? Teachers often have many ideas about ways to improve education and will share these *if* they are not put on the defensive. The success of parent involvement in schools depends on the fit between parents' time and talents, needs perceived by parents, needs perceived by teachers, and the school's ability to welcome parent input.



Parents in a wide variety of circumstances, including those who are employed outside the home, who have partial custody or no custody of a child, or who are busy with younger children, have developed many resourceful ways of positively influencing their children's education. How might you share your unique ideas with other parents?

Your child's education can be greatly enriched by your involvement in his or her school. In these times of diminishing resources, schools need parents' support more than ever. Although some schools are not used to giving parents diverse, meaningful roles, tactful, persistent parents can encourage schools to appreciate the relationship between parent involvement and community support. By expressing their interest, respect, and goodwill, parents and school personnel can establish cooperative communication for the benefit of children.

Both teachers and parents need support and recognition. You can create a supportive climate by recognizing the talents of your child's present or past teachers. Have you told your child's teacher what you appreciate about his or her work? Why not write a note now to your child's current teacher or one who helped your child in the past? It's difficult to predict the knowledge and skills our children will need during their lifetimes, but examples of cooperation and concerned involvement will certainly make lasting, positive impressions.

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Cochran, Moncrieff, and Christiann Dean. **The School Administrator's Role in Promoting Cooperative Communication between Home and School.** Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, N.Y.

Dean, Christiann, and Family Matters team. **Cooperative Communication between Home and School: A Workshop Series for Parents of Elementary School Children.** Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, N.Y.

Dean, Christiann, and Family Matters team. **Cooperative Communication between Home and School: An In-service Education Program for Elementary School Teachers.** Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, N.Y.

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Children and Money
How parents can help children learn about money

by Jennifer Birckmayer

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Can you draw a picture of the ways in which people get money? "When people sell things, they get money" (Benjamin, age 6).

Drawings by Andrew and Benjamin Moore.

Introducing young children to the pleasures and responsibilities of managing money is one of the many challenges facing parents. Most adults, whether or not they are competent in dealing with their own financial affairs, hope that their children will grow up to handle money wisely—neither spending too much nor hoarding too stringently. For all of us, money is an important fact of life; few of us have too much money, and most of us wish that we had more or that the amount we have would stretch further than it does. Reports from counselors, as well as from husbands and wives, indicate that conflicts about financial matters are a major source of marital problems. Although money can be used for pleasure, some adults believe it can also be the source of a good deal of unhappiness.

In many ways money is as sensitive a subject as sex. Even when there are no taboos, parents often don't take time to give their children specific lessons in money fundamentals. Many parents believe that their children will learn by osmosis, by gradual absorption or assimilation. Child development journals contain very little information on money and children; it is almost as if social scientists and psychologists are uneasy about this value-laden subject. It is particularly interesting to contrast this dearth of information with the wealth of studies on children and sexuality—a topic that for so long was also forbidden.

Are we really less articulate about our attitudes towards money than about our attitudes toward sexuality?

Is it possible that children, instead of drawing sensible conclusions from their observations of adults, may perceive that adults use money in a variety of mysterious, seemingly magical ways?

Can we demystify money and reduce it to its proper and useful place by examining our own values and attitudes, attempting to perceive financial affairs through the eyes of children, and providing simple explanations for the not-so-magical functions of money?

As with most important questions, these do not have clear-cut answers. We can, however,

outline a process for parents who wish to explore their own reactions.

As a first step, parents can try to describe their attitudes toward, or values about, money. The process of putting feelings and beliefs into words is always difficult and sometimes painful, but it is an important activity.

Second, parents can describe to each other, a friend, or in writing, the specific actions through which their values about money are communicated to their children.

Next, parents can train themselves to see the world as children see it. Consider, for example, the following episodes in which children have been exposed to the ways in which decisions about money are made.

Three-year-old Susie and her mother are shopping in a large supermarket. As they approach the cashier, Susie begins to beg for a large plastic truck prominently displayed in the front of the store. Susie's mother explains that they don't have enough money to buy the truck. At the check-out Susie continues to wail as she watches her mother pay for the groceries with what to Susie looks like an unending supply of money.

Seven-year-old Priscilla and her father are shopping for a birthday present for Priscilla's mother. They have decided to buy perfume. Priscilla thinks her mother would like the kind that comes in a large bottle shaped like a ballerina. Her father says her mother would prefer the kind that comes in a very small plain bottle, "although it's too darned expensive." They buy the bottle her father has selected even though as Priscilla says crossly, "It's smaller and not as pretty."

Ten-year-old Brian wants a new bike. His parents explain that they cannot afford a new bicycle, then begin to discuss buying a new lawn mower on the installment plan.

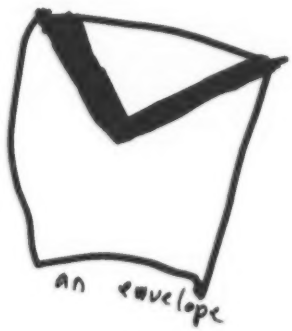
Susie, Brian, and Priscilla are all learning about money in the way most children learn—by watching adults use it. Yet, their observations make it difficult for them to make sense of what they see—unless a perceptive adult offers a few simple explanations.

The fourth step in the process of introducing healthy attitudes toward money is for parents to form realistic expectations for their children's ability to deal with money at each stage of growth. The following guidelines are offered with the caution that no two children are exactly alike. Each child has a unique growing up plan and each may reach certain stages earlier or later than those described here. However, as David Elkind (1971, p. 64) says, "One can agree with the fact of wide individual differences in behavior without denying characteristics common to a particular age."

Birth to two years

Infants and toddlers may be attracted by the brightness of coins and by the sounds they make when they jingle together. Sometimes even babies seem to sense that these small objects, which are just right for picking up with forefinger and thumb, have a value for grown-ups that far exceeds the peas, cereal bits, and pieces of fluff very young children are usually free to examine. Coins are, of course, dangerous for children if they put them in their mouths. They should, therefore, be kept out of reach of very young children although adults can think about the messages they may communicate if they swoop down too quickly with the urgent message, "That's *money* and is *not* for babies—give it to me right now, please!"

Can you draw a picture of some of the things that cost a little money?



Two to three years

By the age of two, most children engage in brief symbolic play, which can include handing over or requesting imaginary money when putting gas into a toy truck, making purchases at a play store, or imitating, in direct and abbreviated ways, business transactions they have observed in adults. Two-year-olds may imitate a man's gesture in reaching for a wallet in his back pants pocket or copy their mothers in sorting busily through a pocketbook. Two- and three-year-olds are interested in coins, usually choosing the brightest and biggest, even if paper money is offered. Although they are notorious hoarders and do not share easily with other children, even these very young children often learn to take money found on the floor, behind the sofa cushion, or in the park directly to their parents. Many of them appear to have received the message that money is special and not for little children. Some seem to understand the notion of saving money, because they put it in a piggy bank.

By the age of three, many children begin to realize that money can be exchanged for goods. They enjoy being the person to hand money to a cashier and sometimes talk excitedly about going to the store to purchase a wanted toy when they have saved all their money. It is not unusual for children of this age and a little older to remove a coveted item from a store without paying for it. If an adult quietly and firmly insists that the item must be taken back to the store because it was not paid for, apologizes to the store clerk, and pays for it or returns it in the child's presence, the behavior is usually not repeated. Occasionally, of course, a child tries two or three times, to be sure the adult really means business.

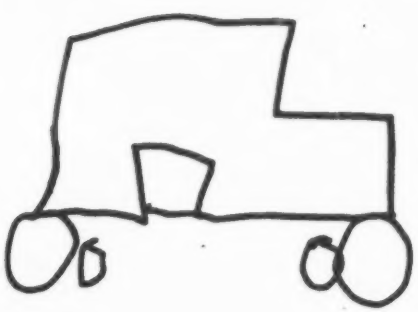
Simple business transactions are often themes for the dramatic play of three- and four-year-olds. Playing restaurant, supermarket, post office, bank, gas station, and so forth gives children valuable opportunities to feel they, too, can deal competently with money. Although adults may be astonished at some of the prices (12¢ for a steak, $69 for peanut butter), the importance of the play is not in the realistic details but in the feelings of power and control it generates for children. Children develop an understanding of exchanges and begin to see themselves as competent in dealing with the world of work.

Four to six years

Four-year-olds sometimes appear to be quite sophisticated in conversations about money. If they are interested, many can understand simple discussions of family finances, although they may not understand the parents' desire to keep the discussion within the family. One four-year-old explained to a neighbor, "We can't buy candy this week because we're too broke." Another child told her babysitter, "First we have to pay for things we need; then, if there's any money left over, sometimes we buy things we want."

Because children think literally, it may be helpful to them to see the family income in cash for one week. Parents who feel comfort-

Can you draw a picture of some of the things that cost a lot of money?



able with this exercise can make signs or draw pictures on pieces of paper, which the child spreads out on a table. Together, parents and child count out the money needed for the rent, food, heat, telephone, and so forth. (This graphic demonstration of what money must be used for can be helpful to parents as well as children.)

We cannot leave our discussion of preschoolers and money without the following words of caution. Money is a serious topic for most adults, but for many children it will be simply one more concept to explore through play. It's important for adults to remember the importance of this play age and not attempt to teach money management skills in a ponderous or overly solemn fashion.

Erik Erikson (1968, p. 123) reminds us, "At nursery-school age, playfulness reaches into the world shared with others. At first these others are treated as things; they are inspected, run into, or forced to "be horsie." Such learning is necessary to discover what potential play content can be admitted only to fantasy or only to play by and with oneself; what content can be successfully represented only in the world of toys and small things; and what content can be shared with others and even forced upon them. It is not restricted to the technical mastery of toys and things, but also includes an infantile way of mastering social experience by experimenting, planning, and sharing."

The adult role with preschoolers is to provide a play environment rich in interesting objects and props and to become a guide, props finder, interpreter, and helper. Children learn on their own if adults do not interfere with too much formal teaching. Providing materials for preschoolers to play restaurant, supermarket, post office, bank, gas station, or car wash offers children opportunities to reenact and make sense of the daily business of money transactions.

"Children are disposed to try to make sense out of their environments. A happy consequence of this tendency is that children often have a genuine interest in achieving explanations of various phenomena.

"They are motivated to delve beneath the surface in order to learn about the causal underpinnings of things. We suggest that this natural tendency might be exploited; that instead of relying on external rewards to motivate children, we might instead try to provide them with the sort of information that would maximize their 'intrinsic' interest in learning. In short we suggest enticing children rather than forcing them to learn" (Condry and Koslowski 1979, p. 255).

Six to eight years

By six many children discuss financial affairs with a kind of verbal sophistication that can mislead adults into believing they understand far more than they do. For example, one six-year-old and his mother visited a store in which there was a special sale on a toy for which the child had been saving for two months. The sale price was several dollars below any the mother had seen advertised, and she knew that her son's piggy bank contained exactly the right amount of money. She suggested that she lend him the money to purchase the toy and that he could repay her when they got home. The child was delighted, the mother wrote out a check, and they drove home with the purchased toy. When the mother asked her son for the money from his piggy bank, however, the child objected because, "You didn't give the store any money, you just wrote a check." Again, the child's need is for simple, clear explanations of procedures that many adults take for granted. Osmosis is not always enough.

Throughout the early school years most children have increasing experiences with money. Kindergarten children can be responsible for taking milk and lunch money to school. Book fairs, class trips, or workbook purchases often require that special funds be carefully transported from home to school. In the beginning many children are somewhat awed by this enormous responsibility. Six- to eight-year-olds may dissolve into tears if they lose money entrusted to them. Parents and teachers will have to work out a careful balance between helping children accept responsibility and ensuring that the burden is not too heavy.

Catalogs, toy stores, and television commercials can present wonderland-like spectacles of delight to the early schoolchild; and parents may have to spend hours patiently reviewing, evaluating, and explaining advertising gimmicks and quality control to their young would-be-purchasers. Allowing children to spend their own money for toys advertised on cereal boxes or on TV and helping them to evaluate the ways in which their purchase does or does not live up to its advertised potential can be an important family activity.

"Don't buy it!" advised one eight-year-old whose six-year-old brother was admiring a car

pictured on the back of a cereal box. "They take those pictures through a magnifying glass just to fool you into thinking it looks like that!"

Eight to ten years

Some eight- to ten-year-olds enjoy planning a simple budget for items such as school notebooks, family birthday presents, and savings. Others are not concerned and spend money with carefree abandon even in the face of stern parental warnings, "That's your allowance for a whole week—when it's gone, there isn't any more!" These children may make plans to be more prudent next week, but when their allowance jingles in their pockets once again, like many adults, they cannot resist the temptation to spend it. Parents sometimes despair and occasionally resort to a kind of enforced budgeting, such as "You can only buy *one* candy bar because you've got to save money for a new science notebook and Dad's birthday is coming up soon. You will want to buy him a present."

It's hard to know whether or not children who practice good habits with an allowance grow up to be adults with sound money-management skills. As previously stated, there appears to be no research that indicates whether or not allowances in childhood influence later money behavior. Common sense suggests that well-established habits may indeed carry over, and yet other influences also affect children's perceptions of money and the ways in which it can be used. The advice-giving books for parents almost invariably suggest that an established allowance is a good idea, but adults must remember that each child processes every experience in a unique way. Some children may react to the careful planning and regular allowance established for them by their parents with a "now I can do whatever I want" attitude in adulthood, whereas for others habits are deeply ingrained and carry over into later years. There are never any guarantees in parenting!

Adolescent years

As children approach adolescence, some parents may find that the simple budgeting procedures and allowances that worked so well for younger children no longer seem appropriate. Other parents realize that their maturing preteens, who indicated little or no previous interest in managing their own financial affairs, develop a keen and proprietary interest in having and managing their own money. The earlier years during which the young child wants to please parents and to do things right begins to wane as the child moves toward adolescence. Certainly part of the often painful process of growing up involves children's realization that their parents are not perfect. Occasionally a preteen may act in ways that leave parents feeling, "We can't do anything right." Children can be touchy, moody, insist on privacy, and protect what they perceive to be their own affairs with a determined, if fragile, dignity. Planning a budget may be scornfully regarded as baby stuff, and parents may have to work very hard to retain their self-confidence and remain calm.

"It's my money!" snaps one eleven-year-old when her father criticizes the purchase of expensive designer jeans. "I'm old enough to make my own decisions!" shouts another after spending accumulated birthday and gift checks on a collection of the latest hit records.

Some parents insist on maintaining earlier rules for budgeting and spending patterns. Some decide that children learn best through experiencing the consequences of their own behavior and try to refrain from giving criticism or advice. Still others confront the issue by saying something like, "It seems the old way of working out a budget and a spending plan isn't acceptable to you anymore. Let's see if we can work out a new plan that's comfortable for all of us."

Teen-agers may prefer to work outside the home for money. What they are allowed to do with earnings—save, spend, or pay into family exchanges—may depend on family values. Once again it becomes essential for parents to communicate early what these values are.

Parents are warned so often to be consistent that it may be confusing to hear that flexibility can be the key to effective parenting during this stage of the parent-child relationship. As children move from eleven and twelve years to early adolescence, however, they are bombarded by internal and external demands. Physically their bodies go through some sudden and enormous changes that are accompanied by new sensations, feelings, and moods. Schools also begin to place pressure on teens to act in increasingly grown-up ways. Friends change, and members of the opposite sex may become increasingly attractive. While children want and need their parents to provide a stable, strong base, they also want and need this base to accommodate them as growing, changing human beings.

We are not advocating a permissive, uncaring attitude on the part of parents. It is vital that parents make their values and expec-

tations clear and explicit. However, this is a time when commitment to important issues is sorted out from lesser commitments. Some of the behavior children and parents worked hard to establish at a younger age, budgeting and saving, for example, may not seem of vital importance as teens struggle to deal with pressure to drink, use drugs, and get good grades. An effective parent knows when to relieve pressure as well as when and where to apply it appropriately.

Basic attitudes toward important issues appear to be "caught" from parents rather than "taught" by them. Children who have experienced a relationship with parents characterized by respect, affection, and honesty will be more likely to adopt parental attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors than children whose relationships with parents have been characterized by stern, unyielding demands for conformity.

In summary, then, when helping children learn about money, parents have a choice. They can choose osmosis—the process of allowing children to observe and listen to adults earn, use, and discuss money—assuming that children will sort out that which is appropriate and useful for them. This is probably the most prevalent method or approach, and unless we as parents believe it can be improved upon, there may be no reason to change it.

The following alternative approach that we suggest requires effort.

- Parents can articulate, as simply and clearly as possible, their values about money.
- Parents can describe ways in which their children can see parental values about money expressed through their behavior.
- Parents can try to see the world as children see it and to look at episodes in which adult assumptions about money can be confusing to children.
- Parents can remind themselves that realistic expectations of children's behavior require some knowledge of the ways in which children learn—knowledge that is widely available through the resources of Cooperative Extension and public libraries throughout the state.
- Parents can establish appropriate, direct learning experiences with money including play in early childhood. These experiences will include those that are acceptable within their culture and community.
- Parents can reassure themselves that effective parent-child communication is a dynamic, ever-changing process. While the quality of mutual respect and love remains the same, the patterns and specific routines of daily life can adapt to the growth and change of individuals within the family.

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Choosing Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

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If you're looking for child care for your infant or toddler, you are not alone. You're one of a growing number of parents who use some form of day care to supplement the care they give their children.

Placing a child under three years of age in day care is a big step, and you may have mixed feelings about it. It is perfectly normal to wonder whether day care will affect your child. It may help you to know that research studies have shown that babies can be in day care without damaging their development or their love for their parents *if the day care settings are of high quality*.

High quality child care is based on our growing understanding about a child's early years. We believe, for instance, that the loving attachments a baby forms with a few trusted adults are necessary for growth and development. Because we know that growth and development happen rapidly during the early years, we believe that adults who care for young children must have a flexible approach so that they are sensitive to the child's needs and inner rhythms. We also believe that the child's daily routines and activities should provide opportunities for play, experimentation, and learning. Above all, we recognize that parents are the most important people in a young child's life and that child care providers must respect and reinforce the importance of the parent-child relationship.

Quality child care takes developmental principles and translates them into safe, responsive, consistent care that enhances the child's growth and development. If you have decided on day care for your infant or toddler, you won't want to settle for less.

Where Do You Begin?

The first step is to decide what type of child care best meets your child's needs. There is really no single type of child care program that is best for all children. Some children are happiest in a homelike atmosphere; others may thrive in a center-based, group program. You must decide on what is best for your child. After all, you're the expert on your child; so you are the most-qualified person to make this decision. If your baby is handicapped or has special needs, you will probably want to consult your doctor or therapist before making a final choice.

You also need to think about personal needs. Think about location. Which day care setting is more convenient, near your home or near the workplace? Think about your schedule. Do you need part-day or full-day care? Is your schedule fairly regular, or is flexibility important? Consider cost. Will you get quality care at a price you can afford? Are you eligible for any assistance or employer benefits for child care?

Let's look at three basic kinds of day care and consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

In-Home Care

The caregiver comes to your home for all or part of the day.

Advantages

- Child or children can be in own home with own things.
- Siblings can be together.
- In-home care may be most flexible to schedule.
- Caregiver often does housework as well as child care (but the child must come first!).
- It may be least expensive care for larger families.
- It may eliminate transportation problems for parents.

Disadvantages

- It may be difficult to find trained caregiver.
- Caregiver may quit with little or no warning.
- There may be little or no opportunity for only child to be with other children.
- It may be most expensive care for small family.
- Caregiver may need transportation.

Family Day Care

Your child goes to the caregiver's home for all or part of the day.

Advantages

- Family day care home may be in your neighborhood.
- Homelike, family atmosphere for child is provided.
- Group size is small.
- There are opportunities for child to interact with other children.
- Siblings can be together.
- Care schedule is often flexible.
- It may be least expensive care for small families.
- New York State Licensing Regulations apply to family day care homes caring for three or more children.
- Licensing regulations set limits on number and ages of children and also set requirements for health, safety, sanitation, and daily program.

Disadvantages

- It may be difficult to find a trained caregiver.
- Caregiver may go out of business with little or no warning.
- Although licensing regulations may apply, very few family day care homes are actually licensed or inspected.

Center-Based Care

Your child goes to a day care center for all or part of the day.

Advantages

- Children can interact with other children of their age.
- Environment is designed specifically for children.
- Child can usually continue in the same center for as long as care is needed.

- Some centers offer sliding fee scale or reduced rate for families with more than one child enrolled.
- Center may provide other services.
- Day care centers in New York State must be licensed and inspected.
- Licensing regulations set certain requirements for facility, health, safety, staff, and educational program.

Disadvantages

- Lack of homelike atmosphere in some centers may be unsuitable for some children.
- Large groups may be unsuitable for some children.
- Large group size may make it difficult for center to follow parent's wishes.
- Age groupings may keep siblings apart.
- Care schedule may be less flexible than for other types.
- It may be most expensive type of care.
- Although centers in New York State are inspected when licensed, follow-up inspections may be infrequent.

Where Do You Look? What Questions Do You Ask?

By now you may have decided on the type of care you would prefer for your child, but finding it can be a problem. If there is a child care/day care council or resource and referral service in your community, ask for their listings. A local school or employer may also offer such a service. Remember that any listings you receive are not recommendations; you will have to investigate and make the final choice.

Sometimes friends, relatives, neighbors, and co-workers have suggestions about child care providers. Some providers are listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under Day Nurseries and Child Care. Look in your local newspaper for ads placed by child care providers, or place an ad yourself. Sometimes you will find information about child care posted on bulletin boards in laundromats, supermarkets, colleges, and local agencies.

When you have a list of providers who meet your requirements, you are ready for the final step—choosing the best care you can find for your child.

A telephone call is the quickest way to decide what in-home caregivers you will want to interview, or what family day care homes or day care centers you will want to visit. Never select any child care without interviews, visits, and satisfactory references.

For **In-Home Care**, ask about the caregiver's training, work experience, plans for the future, and references. Explain the hours that you will need child care, what you are prepared to pay, and any household work that you will expect the caregiver to do. Ask what kinds of things the caregiver feels are important for very young children. If, after talking to the prospective caregiver, you feel that this is the kind of person you are looking for, make an appointment for an interview. Allow time to check references.

At the interview, see how your child and the prospective caregiver react to each other. Talk about whether you and the caregiver agree about how to handle situations such as crying, feeding, toilet training, discipline, television use, naps, and bedtimes. You need to know whether the caregiver really likes babies, is responsible and trustworthy, is patient and flexible, has good physical health and stamina, and is prepared to stay in your employ.

For **Family Day Care** or **Center-Based Care**, ask about location, children's ages and how they are grouped, size of the group, hours and days that care is available, experience and background of caregiver(s), daily routines and activities, fees, and references. It's especially important to know the number of children in each caregiver's charge. Most authorities agree that babies need a close relationship with a primary caregiver; a low ratio of children to adults and a small group size make this more possible. If you feel that this family day care home or day care center is a good place for your child, make an appointment to visit. Allow time to check references.

It is always wise to visit day care centers or homes at least once. If you can arrange to visit twice, go once without your child, so that you can ask questions about fees, payment schedules, and policies on health, safety, discipline, nutrition, and parent involvement. While you are there, take the opportunity to observe routines and activities. See if this would be a safe, friendly, interesting place for your child.

On a second visit with your child, you can concentrate on the interaction between your child, the caregiver, and other children in the group. Take into account that a new experience can be awkward for everyone.

Be aware that extra precautions must be taken for sanitation, safety, and health. Dangerous objects need to be kept safely away, electric outlets should be covered, and sick children should be separated from healthy children. It's important that there is enough space—both indoors and out—and that there are a variety of toys and play materials that are appropriate for your child's age and developmental level. Be sure that there is special equipment such as cribs, feeding tables, and safe, clean diaper-changing areas.

Be sure that you can visit the day care center or family day care home at any time. Reliable day care providers want parents to be involved in the program, to exchange information, and to serve on committees and policy boards. Being involved gives you many opportunities to ensure quality care for your child.

Above all, you need to know whether the caregiver likes and understands babies and agrees with your basic philosophy about feeding, crying, toilet training, discipline, naps, and bedtime.

In Summary

Choosing quality child care is a major decision. It requires considerable thought, time, and patience. The important things to look for when choosing infant/toddler day care are

- a knowledgeable, loving caregiver who enjoys working with very young children and is willing to work with you to provide the best care for your child;
- a safe, friendly, interesting environment that will nurture your child's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development;
- daily routines and activities that give your child opportunities to play, experiment, explore, and learn; and
- consistent, responsible care that helps your child realize how special he or she really is.

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Tips on Working with Children in Groups

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Tips on Working with Children in Groups

At a conference on working with preadolescents, two group leaders described some of their experiences with nine- to twelve-year-olds:

Bob: "One of the best discussions our group ever had came out of a tragedy that affected every member. A classmate of theirs was injured as a result of a car accident in which her mother died. The kids were all shocked. I don't think it had occurred to them that something that bad could happen to someone close to them. They talked about it—several even cried—and I was very impressed by their caring, their gentleness, their real compassion."

Sally: "I had the same experience with my group, only it grew out of a discussion about the kind of party we should have in December, as some of our members are Jewish and others are Christian. I was surprised at the interest and openness they all had in and to each other's ideas. They even wanted to know about theological doctrine and religious history—things I had no idea they cared about."

Bob: "It's unexpected times like those that provide leaders with the greatest rewards. But it seems impossible to plan them. You just have to be receptive and flexible enough to let go of the activity you have planned."

Planning Activities

The kinds of discussions Bob and Sally describe grow out of an atmosphere of trust created over time by leaders and group participants. Usually this kind of trust emerges when adults and children are involved in mutually satisfying activities. As most parents discover, children often choose the most unexpected times to initiate discussions about sensitive issues such as life, death, sexuality, and reality. Such discussions are impossible to plan. Therefore, the program of activities for any meeting must be flexible enough to allow small or total group discussions to occur if they arise.

Activities will be most effective if they:

1. Are planned to allow each member to proceed at his or her own pace. Some children may want to rush through a planned activity to have time to talk and "fool around." For these children the value of the group is in the information or knowledge provided. Still other children may only pay lip service to the activity or even try to ignore it entirely. The value of the group for them may be the chance to have a close relationship with a respected adult.
2. Reflect a mutual planning process. Few experiences are more difficult for a conscientious leader than to have a carefully planned, researched, and prepared project fail because group members are apathetic, or say it is boring or babyish. Unlike school, extracurricular activities do not rely solely on adult notions of what children need or will find interesting. The involvement of participants in the planning process will be critical to the success of the activities. Important skills in planning, arbitration, compromise, communication, and consideration are developed when children assume responsibility for planning the activities in which they will participate.
3. Allow some choice. Although the nature of some activities (a field trip or a show, for example) will not allow many choices for individual members, whenever possible children should have some alternatives within a preplanned activity. Children do not respond enthusiastically to adult assignments of roles or tasks, although this often may appear to be the most efficient way to get something done! Respecting and encouraging individual interests, abilities, and wishes is more important than expecting every child to participate equally in every part of a particular activity.

Activities chosen by leaders and members together form the foundation for a meaningful group experience. For many children, however, activities may be simply the excuse for joining the group, as their needs are for social relationships and a sense of belonging.

What is an effective leader?

It may be that Bob has described the most important characteristics of a good leader: someone who is sensitive to the needs of the moment, and flexible enough to let young people explore what is of importance to them.

Too often preteens hear "this is an interesting discussion but now let's get on with what we have to do today." Sometimes this happens because supervisors have created rigid expectations for particular activities to take place. More often it happens because leaders themselves are uneasy about discussions that involve values, strong feelings, or topics that are not usually talked about very much.

However, parents, leaders, and supervisors usually agree that the most valuable part of a youth group experience is the opportunity for members to test out their ideas, beliefs, and skills in a supportive environment, with friends and adults who will respect them and can communicate with them.

The ability to communicate with preteens may therefore be one of the most important skills a leader can have. While we often think of talking as the most important skill in communication it may well be that most leaders should

STOP TALKING! Begin to listen effectively!

Dr. Shirley O'Brien suggests the following guidelines:

"1. *Be interested and attentive.* Children can tell whether they have an adult's interest and attention by the way the adult replies or doesn't reply. Maintain eye contact to show that you are really with the child. Showing interest in children and their activities will encourage them to express their feelings and make them feel important. Children tend to feel very close to an adult who, by expressing concern and caring, gets them talking about themselves.

"2. *Encourage talking.* Some children need an invitation to start talking. Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think them important.

"3. *Listen patiently.* People think faster than they speak. With limited vocabulary and experience in talking, children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time.

"4. *Hear children out.* Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. It is easy to form an opinion or reject children's views before they finish what they have to say. It may be hard not to stop them and set them straight, but respect their right to have and to express their opinions.

"5. *Reflect feelings.* Perhaps the most important skill of a good listener is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to imagine what they are experiencing apart from your own thoughts and feelings. Try to mirror children's feelings by verbally reflecting them back to them.

"Restating or rephrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions which they may not be fully aware of: Child: 'School is dumb! I hate it!' Adult: 'Sounds like you're pretty angry at something that happened at school today.' Children need to learn that it is okay to have angry feelings but it is not always okay to act on them. You might say, 'I know you are mad at her for tearing your magazine and you feel like hitting her, but say it with words, don't hit.'

"6. *Help clarify and relate experiences.* As you listen, try to clarify a child's feelings by stating them in your own words. Your larger vocabulary can help children express themselves as accurately and clearly as possible and give them a deeper understanding of inner thoughts and words. Child: 'I got so upset I didn't know what I was doing.' Adult: 'You mean you panicked?'

"7. *Listen to nonverbal messages.* Many messages children send are communicated nonverbally by their tone of voice, the look on their faces, their energy level, body posture, or change in behavior patterns. You often can learn more from the way a child says something than from what is said.

"You set a powerful example of good or poor communication. How? Communication skills are influenced by the examples children see and hear. Adults who listen to children with interest, attention, and patience set a valuable example. The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them."[1]

It's not always easy

However, even with good leaders like Bob and Sally, group life with preteens is not always easy. The following, which appeared in *The New Yorker* thirty years ago, may describe one characteristic of some preteens today:

"The rules of a secret society of nine- and ten-year-old girls in a certain community on Long Island that shall here be nameless are as follows:

1. Do not tell a white lie unless necessary.
2. Do not hurt anyone in any way.
3. Do not hit anyone except Ronny.
4. Do not tell a black lie.
5. Do not use words worse than "brat."
6. Do not curse at all.
7. Do not make faces except at Ronny.
8. Do not be selfish.
9. Do not make a hog or a pig of yourself.
10. Do not tattle except on Ronny.
11. Do not steal except from Ronny.
12. Do not destroy other people's property, except Ronny's.
13. Do not be a sneak.
14. Do not be grumpy except to Ronny.
15. Do not answer back except to Ronny."[2]

An adult who does not remember the sudden passions, the importance of belonging (which sometimes implies a need to exclude), and the apparent lack of empathy in children, who at other times can be sensitive and loving, may well be dismayed by the blatant cruelty expressed to poor Ronny in these fifteen "rules." While it would be inappropriate for a leader to accept, shrug off, or ridicule children for such cruelty, here again the best way to handle it may be through listening and paying close attention to the strong feelings expressed by the children. Adult moralizing or preaching usually will not produce positive results.

The rites, rituals, rules, games, and strong feelings that characterize children in the middle years of childhood can seem mysterious, or even foreign, to adults. To increase understanding, it may be helpful to reach back into one's own childhood to recapture the vividness and intensity of life for preadolescents.

Getting in touch with our own childhood

Consider the following questions. Think for a moment of yourself as a nine-, ten-, eleven-, or twelve-year-old.

1. Where did you live?
   What fragrance or odor do you remember from that place?
   What might you and your family have had to eat for supper? On a typical Friday evening? For a special occasion?
   What sounds do you associate with where you lived? Traffic? Music—what kind? Grown-ups talking? Katydids or birds?
2. Who were the important people in your life? Parents? Grandparents? Cousins? Siblings? Friends?
3. Remember one time when you were really happy. How did you feel? Who shared your feeling? How did you express your feeling?
4. Remember one time when you were really angry. How did you feel? Who shared your feeling? How did you express your feeling?
5. What were you most afraid of?
6. What did you most enjoy?

One woman remembering the summer evenings following her tenth birthday wrote:

"The mad, delirious excitement of tag
in the just-darkness—rounding shadowy
corners to find
Stanley perhaps
or perhaps a half-ghost
waiting to spring and bear you, shrieking
away to its hellish lair. Scratched knees,
dirty hands, sweat-soaked shirts and grassy shorts
—bodies lying in a row on the
cool dark dampness as the stars grow brighter
and the 'time for bed' cries of mothers
are chanted from the doorways."

A second approach to getting in touch with childhood is through children's books.

Some adults experience a sudden feeling of "yes, that is just what it was like for me" when they read certain passages of books written primarily for children, but written by authors who are particularly skillful in capturing the moods and flavors of childhood. Many current books for children are helpful, also, in describing the variety of family structures and life styles children cope with in modern times. Librarians in the children's section will be helpful in finding books of this kind.

Adults who can successfully remember the sensations of their own childhoods shouldn't assume that they can therefore understand the feelings of the children who are members of their groups. Most people feel cheated when they hear "I know how you feel; the same kind of thing happened to me when I was your age."

It's probably more helpful to hear "You sound really sad—or happy—or angry—or concerned" as the case may be. The purpose of these exercises is to remind adults that childhood is a unique personal experience for each of us, characterized by strong feelings and powerful sensations.

"Sometimes nothing works"

Children of this age can be a challenge! Sometimes kind, cooperative, and helpful, they also can be cruel, defiant, and destructive. While all six of these characteristics can be exhibited by the same child within a twenty-minute time span, some children seem to go on "jags" when one or two of these traits may seem to dominate their personalities for hours, days, or weeks.

Adult leaders often bewail the fact that, after all their careful planning with the members, the group "exploded," or "fell apart." Occasionally this happens because the adult has overly high, or overly low expectations for the group; or events, relationships, or anxieties are creating pressure; or there are disruptive circumstances outside the control of the leader or the children. At other times, under the most propitious conditions and with skilled, sensitive leadership, a group "falls apart" for no reason at all. It's important for the adult leader and the group members to realize that when this happens it is not necessarily anyone's fault. Instead of allocating blame (We should have planned it better" or "I knew I shouldn't have agreed to be a group leader!) TRY ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. Describe what seems to be happening:

"We're having a hard time settling down today." "Seems like this group feels a little crazy today."

Be nonjudgmental and matter-of-fact. Your acknowledgment will not necessarily improve the situation (and it may make it temporarily even worse!) but the children will hear that you are not going to be angry or punitive and your accepting attitude may catch their attention.

2. Offer one or two realistic choices:

"Shall we forget this project today and walk over to the park where we can work off some energy?"

"Would you prefer to go to the gym today and see if we could use the tumbling mats?"

3. If there are no alternatives, try to make it possible for those participants who want to work to do so in a protected corner of the room. Keep your eye on the rest of the group for safety reasons, but don't force them to join the project.

4. If possible, "divide and conquer." Ask the group to work in pairs or small groups on specific pieces of the group activity. Circulate quietly among small groups instead of trying to remain in control of a large one.

5. For some children the touch of a hand or an arm around the shoulder is a steadying influence—other children don't want to be touched and can be very active in attempts to maintain distance between themselves and the adult. The leader should know the children well to determine whether brief affectionate, physical contact will be helpful and appropriate.

6. Delegate authority and responsibility whenever possible—preferably in advance of the meeting. If children arrive knowing they are responsible for the success or failure of the activity, they may be more inclined to engage in constructive actions.

"Susie, thanks for bringing the tools we need. Will you arrange them on that work table and be in charge of giving them to the people who need them?"

"Charles, those refreshments look very inviting. Could you and William set them up in the kitchen so we can all enjoy them soon?"

Involving each child in a task immediately upon arrival does take planning—and it also means getting yourself to the meeting place well before children are expected. Leaders who arrive late, or at the last minute, with a single, poorly prepared project can expect chaos and confusion.

7. Express your feelings honestly and directly—but briefly! Be sure the children know about your positive feelings as well as those that may not be quite so positive.

"I had a good time with you all today; you are a great group!

"I felt very tired after our meeting last week because I had so much cleanup to do. Can we make a plan to prevent that from happening again?"

"Elsie, I can see that you are not interested in this activity but I need your help in making it possible for the other kids to work, and I also need your ideas about things you would like to do."

8. Children who have been in school all day need opportunities for vigorous activity. You may find that a hike, an active group game, or playground activities are essential before the children in your group can settle down.

9. If you are having particular difficulty with one or two of the children in your group, try to plan a visit or activity alone with each of them.

"Thelma, you and I seem to be at odds with each other during our meetings. Could you come over to my house for a snack after school tomorrow? I think if we got to know each other better our relationship in the group would improve."

Will the other children in the group be jealous, or think you are rewarding Thelma for "bad" behavior? Maybe. A brief explanation may help. "Thelma and I are spending some time together so our times with the group will be more pleasant. I'd enjoy a visit alone with any one of you who would like it."

You may end up having a different child at your house every day for a month for a cup of hot chocolate—and it may result in one of the best groups you have ever led. Don't be afraid to set limits. "Four to four-thirty is my half-hour for a snack and I've enjoyed sharing it with you, but now I have to get to work. Thanks for coming over!" Working leaders? How about a visit from individual group members after supper—parent delivers child to the leader's house and the leader takes him/her home. Sounds like a lot of time and trouble? Probably no more than the time and trouble you'll spend worrying about a bad situation in your group.

10. Expect some failures. Each group has a different dynamic, almost a unique personality. Some groups are turbulent, others "click" almost from the first meeting. Each group will present a unique set of challenges and rewards.

Glory in your successes. A close and trusting relationship with a respected adult can be the greatest gift a child will ever receive. Bestowing such a gift is a grave responsibility and a very great joy—and is yours to give.

Practice situations for discussion

1. As a preholiday activity you, the leader, have prepared an array of exciting materials for the creation of holiday greeting cards. All the children are pleased and excited and want to get right to work, except ten-year-old Sam, who tells you he hates art work and doesn't want to make a greeting card..

2. Your group has worked very hard to prepare a special snack as a birthday celebration for one member of the group whose mother has been hospitalized for two weeks. Unexpectedly, one nine-year-old suddenly reaches across the table and sweeps the muffins onto the floor. In the silence that follows, she bursts into tears and runs out of the room.

3. You are trying to have a serious planning discussion with your group of eleven- and twelve-year-olds. You hope to involve them in the process of decision making, while at the same time learning more about their interests. Instead of responding to you seriously, two children begin to whisper and giggle, clearly excluding and talking about one member of the group.

4. A parent has called you to discuss her worries about her twelve-year-old daughter who is unknown to you. The mother believes her daughter has a "bad reputation." She is smoking secretly, meeting boys after school, neglecting school work, and behaving in a sulky and secretive fashion. The mother has called you because you work with young people and she has heard you relate well to them.

5. Bob has always been an enthusiastic member of your group. Now he is twelve he seems to be a "changing personality." He is quiet, often absent, and his mother reports that he spends a great deal of time alone doing nothing or listening to the radio. His mother hopes he will continue to be an active member of your group.

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